A SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

THE OTHER WAR

The Nation.

MILITARY VETERANS SPEAK ON THE RECORD ABOUT ATTACKS ON IRAQI CIVILIANS

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LETTERS

Letters

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

ANYTHING BOYS CAN DO...

South Orange, N.J.

■ Fortunately, those who love *The Dangerous Book for Boys* despite its casual sexism will have a better girls' alternative than the rather Victorian *The Great Big Glorious Book for Girls* [Katha Pollitt, "Subject to Debate," July 9]. The true companion book is called *The Daring Book for Girls*, by Andrea Buchanan and Miriam Peskowitz (whom I represent) coming this fall, and it will be every bit as fun and adventurous as its predecessor. It may not counter the Anglo- imperial martial spirit of the boys' book, but it will still do a lot to level the playing field.

SAM STOLOFF

San Francisco

■ When leftists assign motive for actions, they forget that boys forget to be political unless some *Nation*-nanny smacks them across the nose with it. Self-sacrificing white male patriotic heroism, exemplified this minute by the 100,000 all-volunteer servicemen in Iraq and Afghanistan, three-quarters of whom say they enlisted "because of 9/11," is alive and very well, despite the feminist assault prevalent in education and left media. These heroes hate what the hate-America *Nation* types are broadcasting back home but are dutifully silent, until they get back. We are, no kidding, on a crusade, about the fifth according to my specialty in history. Believe your murderous Islamist soulmates when they say it daily.

MIKE SMITH

VILLALOBOS IN *THE NATION*?

New York City

■ I write not so much to disagree with Joaquín Villalobos's July 9 "Revolution in Venezuela?"—although I do—as to reveal Villalobos's post–Salvadoran war trajectory, which is marked by values and actions I think *The Nation* neither shares nor wants to promote.

First, a clarification: Villalobos was not the "top commander and strategist of the leftist FMLN in El Salvador," as his author bio states. He was the leader of the ERP, one of the five groups constituting the insurgency, but he at no time led the FMLN politically or militarily.

Villalobos has made several statements supporting the US invasion of Iraq. Another example of his turn to the right: a March 23, 2004, *Nation* article documented how the Colombian government used human rights rhetoric to cover up the paramilitary death squad activities, mass arrests, rape and other atrocities perpetrated by the Uribe administration; Villalobos stated in a May 16, 2004, interview in Uruguay's *La Republica*, "In Latin America, Colombia is the first country that has applied a model in which human rights have been turned into a strategic advantage." Villalobos served as a "conflict consultant" to the Uribe government. His critiques of the Latin American left and his conflict-consulting business appear to have taken off in synergistic ways.

Villalobos left El Salvador following the political and personal defeats he suffered in the postwar period. He and seven members of the ERP were ousted from the FMLN for cutting a deal with the extreme right-wing ARENA government. Among the more controversial components of what was known as the San Andreas Pact: privatization of public services, tariff reduction, reduced civil service protection and greater "flexibility" of labor.

Joining a host of El Salvador's military leaders who hold primary responsibility for the country's worst crimes against humanity, Villalobos is one of the few former FMLN commanders named in the nonpartisan Truth Commission Report, which documents war crimes and other atrocities committed during the Salvadoran war. The report states, "There is full evidence that Joaquín Villalobos, as General-Secretary of ERP, held the highest position in that organization and bears special responsibility for the murders of mayors by ERP." The report also recommended barring Villalobos from public office for life.

Many in El Salvador believe Villalobos went to Oxford as part of a calculated effort to reinvent himself following his disgrace, especially his acknowledgment after many years of denial of responsibility for the murder of Roque Dalton, El Salvador's most revered poet and revolutionary. In an interview with my friend and fellow writer Juan José Dalton—Roque's son—Villalobos admitted eighteen years later that the murder was "unjust, an error of youth, the worst that I committed." Juan José calmly rejected this explanation by responding that "to accept that that phase of life—youth—is potentially criminal, is not possible."

Except for the most extreme of extreme right-wing newspapers, such as *El Diario de Hoy*, that still publish him in El Salvador, Villalobos, the former guerrilla strategist, is no longer winning many hearts and minds in the country he left years ago.

ROBERTO LOVATO
New American Media

Washington, D.C.

■ Joaquín Villalobos condemns President Chávez on the grounds that the three-times-elected leader is less revolutionary than he claims to be and dismisses changes in Venezuela as inauthentic because they have lacked violence and austerity. Villalobos's uninformed eagerness to discredit the government does not deserve to be taken seriously by progressives.

Poverty in Venezuela has fallen by about 10 percent through policies that include food subsidies and missions in health and education. Contrary to Villalobos's claim, a pro-poor orientation was the key to Chávez's ascent as a young soldier and remains a cornerstone of his popularity today.

The nonrenewal of RCTV may tug at the cultural common ground of Venezuelans, but it is far from "as bad as leaving them without food," because culture simply cannot be revoked. It is constantly being renovated, and changes bring opportunity. Villalobos is narrow-minded to assume that RCTV's lewd programming would count as an irreplaceable part of Venezuelan national identity.

Just as culture is a dynamic process in which citizens are actively involved, so is politics, and the coordinates of revolution have changed since Villalobos's day. Venezuela's Twenty-first Century Socialism provides an alternative to the status quo without bloodshed or repression. In this sense, it resembles the Zapatista movement in Mexico, a peaceful push for democratic pluralism and indigenous rights. In the face of rampant global poverty and inequality, the fight against social, political and economic exclusion has become a revolutionary cause.

As a student of politics, Villalobos should know that socialism, like any model, is in practice expected to deviate from its textbook definition. If Chávez's policies indeed "change some rules of the game" without fitting neatly into categories like "socialism" or "revolution," perhaps the failure lies instead with Villalobos's arrogant use of outmoded political theory.

MEGAN MORRISSEY
Venezuela Information Office

New York City

■ After seven months in El Salvador on a journalism fellowship, I was shocked to read the author's bio of Joaquín Villalobos in *The Nation*. It is inaccurate, incomplete and warrants a correction. It refers to Villalobos solely as a "top commander and strategist of the leftist FMLN in El Salvador" and "a principal in the 1992 peace accords," implying a current association with the FMLN. While it is true he once belonged to a faction of the FMLN and he did sign the peace agreement, the former guerrilla army is now a political party, and Villalobos has not belonged to the FMLN for many years. On the contrary, Villalobos is a leading critic of the Salvadoran and Latin American left. He is a columnist for *El Diario de Hoy*, an ex-

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EDITORIALS

The Deadly Occupation

One day in January 2005, an elderly couple was driving down a road in Mosul, Iraq, when without realizing it they passed through a makeshift US military checkpoint. The checkpoint, recalled a sergeant who came upon the scene, was "very poorly marked." Yet, he said, the soldiers "got spooked" and opened fire. The bodies of the couple sat in the car for three days, the sergeant said, "while we drove by them day after day."

That incident was no Haditha or Abu Ghraib. It was a fairly typical day for Iraqis under US occupation. As Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian make clear in their exhaustive investigation in this issue, the degradation and killing of civilians by US troops have become commonplace in Iraq. At tense checkpoints, in futile house-to-house searches, as convoys and patrols hurtle down the roads, the official rules of engagement and unofficial day-to-day practices of the occupation often add up to shoot first and ask questions never. The results make for tough reading: a family's dog gunned down for barking, a 2-year-old shot in a spray of gunfire, the terrified scream of a father awakened in a midnight raid. Few such incidents were reported, according to most of those interviewed; even fewer resulted in discipline.

This *Nation* investigation, based on interviews with fifty soldiers, sailors and marines, marks the first time so many veterans have spoken on the record about civilian casualties at the hands of US troops in Iraq. They have shown notable courage in speaking out about the horrors they witnessed. Most insisted that only a minority in their ranks have killed civilians indiscriminately. Yet such abuses are common enough that many veterans have returned home with deep emotional scars.

It is time to reckon with the weight of evidence that American forces regularly kill Iraqi noncombatants. Occupying armies with little knowledge of the local culture, fighting guerrillas who mingle among the population, have usually meant disaster for civilians. In Iraq, the impossible mission, poor training and inconsistent and irresponsible rules of engagement have compounded the problem, leading many American soldiers to conclude that endangering civilians is simply the cost of staying safe; to consider all Iraqis the enemy; or, under extreme stress, to lash out in revenge after insurgent attacks.

As described by these veterans, the occupation of Iraq has become a classic example of what psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton calls an "atrocity-producing situation." Their testimony of eroding moral constraint, a direct consequence of the untenable position in which they've found themselves, was confirmed recently by the Pentagon. A May survey by the US Army Medical Command that should disturb every American found that just 47 percent of soldiers and 38 percent of marines agreed that civilians should be treated with dignity and respect.

Veterans of conscience deserve encouragement for speaking up. Instead they face a Congress that has been willfully blind to civilian casualties and has tolerated virtually no reporting on this matter from the Pentagon. It is time for a Congressional inquiry into these daily attacks on Iraqi civilians, one that traces responsibility up the chain of command. Most important, we need to wake up to the true costs of this war. If the President and his aides lie about the war with no consequence, if troops are deployed again and again to prop up a deteriorating occupation, if the rules of engagement guarantee frequent brutalization of noncombatants, then it is no wonder some soldiers conclude that their conduct has few limits. And it should come as no surprise that an occupation of this sort continues to inflame anti-American sentiment throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. The problem is not a few "bad apples" (Bush's phrase after Abu Ghraib) but the occupation itself. It needs to end.

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Racists & Robber Barons

Justice Stephen Breyer is the very model of a decorous Supreme Court Justice. That's why his impassioned soliloquy condemning the majority's decision in the school desegregation cases, delivered on the last day of the Court's term, drew so much attention. Those opinions "threaten the promise" of *Brown v. Board of Education*, he said. "This is a decision that the Court and the nation will come to regret."

These cases represent the last chapter in the half-century effort to end racial isolation in the public schools. The Seattle and Louisville integration plans that the five-member majority struck down are remarkable in their modesty. These communities weren't sending kids across town on long bus rides in the name of racial balance, and neither of them was using a strict racial quota to assign students. "I am not aware of any district that is actively seeing the broad-based use of a race-based mechanism to dictate large portions of the districts' student assignments," says Joseph Olchefske, former superintendent of schools in Seattle. In both cities, race was simply a tiebreaker in determining which students could attend a popular school. There has to be some rule for making decisions in these cases—race was selected, says Olchefske, because it's "a way of promoting a better environment for learning." What's wrong with that?

These two cities came to adopt race-sensitive choice plans in ways that reflect their local political values. In the 1970s, confronted by threats of a desegregation lawsuit, Seattle began to bus students; when that arrangement generated widespread hostility, the district settled for a more modest, and more educationally defensible, process that allowed more than 90 percent of the students to attend their first- or second-choice school.

In the same era, court-ordered desegregation roiled the city of Louisville. A reporter at the *Louisville Courier-Journal* described "angry mobs silhouetted by fires in the streets. The pungent odor of tear gas." But over the years the citizens concluded that integration was an important objective. When the district emerged from a quarter-century of judicial monitoring in 2000, the school board voted to keep intact much of the court-ordered plan, which countenanced race-conscious assignments to maintain diversity. It was a popular decision—two-thirds of parents agreed that a school's enrollment should reflect the district's racial mix, according to a 2000 survey, and a survey done the following year found that 85 percent of Louisville high school seniors reported that because they'd attended integrated schools, they were better equipped to live in a diverse society.

In the desegregation cases, as in many of the 5-to-4 rulings, ideology trumped principle. For years conservatives had argued against judicial meddling in local politics, but in Seattle and Louisville the activist conservatives were quite happy to meddle. And while the right has regularly intoned that the Court isn't a super school board, the five-member majority unhesitatingly substituted its views about good education for those of school officials. Chief Justice John Roberts wrapped himself in the mantle of *Brown*. "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race. When it

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comes to using race to assign children to schools, history will be heard." But Roberts must have flunked American history, since to pretend that there is no difference between Little Rock circa 1957 and Louisville circa 2007 upends history.

In the aftermath of the decision, there were defenders of integration who tried to salvage something from the wreckage. While I wish those stalwarts were right, they're whistling in the dark. One argument, proffered by University of Virginia law professor Michael Klarman, is that just as *Brown* didn't have much direct impact—substantial desegregation in the Deep South awaited the 1964 Civil Rights Act—these opinions won't make much of a practical difference either. But in declaring that segregation is immoral and unconstitutional, *Brown* challenged a way of life in the South and changed the national conversation about race. Anyone who believes that's unimportant might contemplate a counterhistory in which the Justices upheld "separate but equal."

UCLA political scientist Gary Orfield, who has been documenting the resegregation of the public schools, searched for solace in Justice Anthony Kennedy's concurring opinion. A diversity-minded district might pursue the hints Kennedy dropped like bread crumbs and try to achieve racial mixing indirectly by targeting efforts to recruit students and teachers, redrawing attendance zones, building new schools with race in mind, pairing neighborhoods and using family income to assign students.

But Kennedy is no Lewis Powell, whose paean to "diversity" in the 1978 *Bakke* decision became the backdoor route to affirmative action in higher education. Every nostrum that Kennedy proffered has been tried and failed. Case in point: San Francisco. When the district, nudged by a lawsuit, stopped using race as a factor in student assignment, substituting a "diversity index" that took into account such ostensibly race-related factors as family income and educational background, as well as the racial composition of the neighborhood, one in three San Francisco public schools promptly became resegregated. As the judge in that case noted, "the diversity index…has in fact allowed, if not fostered, resegregation." The amicus briefs filed in the case make this point, which Kennedy simply chose to ignore.

The well-organized lawyers who brought these cases aren't going to stop there. "We will want to enforce the decision nationwide," says Sharon Browne of the conservative Pacific Legal Foundation, ticking off several California districts, including Los Angeles and Berkeley, which she believes are using race in assigning students. Confronted with the very real possibility of seven-figure lawyers' fees, what school district is going to test the limits of Kennedy's tolerance for racial specificity?

After these rulings, school integration got more ink than it has in a long time. That long silence reflects the fact that it hasn't had much of a constituency for years. Still, it's a stone in the heart that the Gang of Five has forced communities like Seattle and Louisville on the defensive, obliging them to do good, if at all, by stealth. "This is the last generation of Euro-American leadership in the country," says Orfield, "and we are blowing it. We're not creating a unified culture. Instead we are polarizing the country. Down the road this will be an extremely puzzling decision—it shows the craziness of whites at the end of their time."

On the same day the desegregation decision was handed down, the Justices, by the same one-vote majority, overturned a ninety-year-old antitrust precedent that forbade manufacturers from dictating retail prices. That opinion received little attention outside the business pages, but as Justice Breyer, again in dissent, pointed out, "It will likely raise the price of goods at retail." Guess who loses in that scenario? As the Justices decamp for their three-month vacation, only racists and robber barons have cause to cheer their handiwork. DAVID L. KIRP

David L. Kirp, professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, is a regular contributor to The Nation. *His latest book,* The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics, *will be published in August.*

Poison for Profit

In November 2006, America's dogs and cats started dying painful, mysterious and sometimes gruesome deaths—canaries in the coal mine of a food safety system on the verge of collapse. Previously healthy pets would suddenly vomit blood and bile, produce bloody diarrhea and lose control of bladder and bowel. Some animals displayed unquenchable thirst, while others refused to eat or drink at all. Victims became lethargic and withdrawn, their limbs wobbly, eyes cloudy and stomachs painfully distended. Then the seizures set in.

The nationwide veterinary chain Banfield estimates that as many as 39,000 dogs and cats were sickened or killed in this manner between December 2006 and February 2007 alone. Yet nobody seemed to notice—not the Food and Drug Administration, not the Department of Agriculture, not the Centers for Disease Control, not even Menu Foods, the little-known pet food manufacturing giant that had been fielding calls from concerned customers for months. It was not until late February, when its own animals started dropping dead just days into its quarterly taste test, that Menu Foods realized our beloved family pets were being poisoned by their own food.

Cut-rate imported Chinese wheat gluten, used to make the meatlike chunks in "cuts and gravy" pet food varieties, had been adulterated with a deadly cocktail of melamine and cyanuric acid, but what the media largely covered as just a "pet food recall" proved to be only one in a series of regulatory failures that have put our two-legged family members at equal or greater risk. In the months that followed, "voluntary recalls" were belatedly issued because of antifreeze in toothpaste, banned antibiotics in farmed seafood and lead paint on Thomas the Tank Engine toys—all imported from China and all unwittingly consumed or otherwise used by Americans for months, if not years.

And had this "food grade" wheat gluten made its way to the US bakery and breakfast cereal manufacturers who use 530 million pounds annually, it could have created the largest and deadliest mass food poisoning in American history. Indeed, given the often silent, progressive nature of renal failure, and our regulatory and public health agencies' woeful inability to prevent, uncover, track or remedy such incidents,

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we cannot be certain that it already hasn't.

Hyperbole? Just days after pronouncing that there is "no acceptable level" of melamine and cyanuric acid in human food, the USDA and FDA suddenly recanted after learning that these industrial chemicals had also contaminated more than 23 million chickens and 56,000 hogs. Even as our pets were dying, the USDA/FDA issued a comically Orwellian joint press release proclaiming "no evidence of harm to humans" from eating melamine-tainted meat: "While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention systems would have limited ability to detect subtle problems…no problems have been detected to date."

How reassuring.

Clearly, our regulatory agencies wield neither the resources nor the mandate to enforce adequate standards at home, let alone keep pace with the rapidly globalizing food and drug industries. Americans were shocked to learn that the world's largest wheat exporter now imports more than 70 percent of its wheat gluten; but we also import 20 percent of our generic and over-the-counter drugs, 40 percent of active pharmaceutical ingredients and 80 percent of our seafood—much of it from developing nations with lax standards and little regulatory enforcement. Yet even as the FDA struggled to track poisoned gluten through the food supply, it announced plans to close seven of thirteen regional testing labs.

It would be convenient to blame this plodding, inadequate response on mere incompetence or negligence or even base corruption. But simply replacing one regulator with another (or executing an FDA director, as China has done) would do little to fix a regulatory system that lacks the mandate to regulate.

Yes, our regulatory agencies are incompetent. But they are incompetent by design. How else to explain a system that splits food safety oversight across multiple, noncoordinated agencies; that inspects no more than 1 percent of the imports that make up a growing portion of the American diet; and that even lacks the basic authority to impose mandatory recalls? How else to explain a government that promotes industry self-regulation, yet wages a court battle to prevent beef producers from testing all their cattle for mad cow disease—or that chooses to invest hundreds of billions of dollars fighting terrorists "over there" while cutting funds for protecting a vulnerable food supply at home? On stepping down from office in 2004, former Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson warned, "I, for the life of me, cannot understand why the terrorists have not attacked our food supply, because it is so easy to do."

How do we explain yet another known terrorist threat gone unheeded?

The explanation is simple. For decades our government has been dominated by a conservative ideology that claims to despise big government, abhor regulation and adhere to an unswerving faith in the infinite wisdom of the market. Rick Perlstein dubs this philosophy "E. Coli Conservatism," and in practice it is not only flawed but corrupt: a calculated conservative project intended to gut our regulatory systems in the interest of sheer corporate greed. We eat adulterated food not because we cannot adequately regulate the industry but because to do so would eat into the profits of the corporations our regulators serve.

In the six years since 9/11, food-borne pathogens and toxins have quietly killed ten times the number of Americans who died in the terrorist attacks. How many more Americans must conservatism kill before our leaders embrace a more responsible ideology?

DAVID GOLDSTEIN

David Goldstein blogs on Washington State politics at horsesass.org and on national politics at Huffington Post. He is also a talk-radio host on Seattle's KIRO-AM (710).

CALVIN TRILLIN

Two Sets of Parents Hear That Ralph Nader May Run Again

In the 2000 presidential campaign, Mr. Nader contended that the Republican and Democratic parties were so similar it would make little difference whether Mr. Bush or Mr. Gore were elected. —New York Times

You thought your kid might be assigned
To decent schools. Now, never mind.
Because Bush judges tipped the court,
All integration plans abort.
Take comfort hearing Ralph proclaim:
The major parties are the same.

You're worried sick about Iraq—
The war devised by Bush's claque.
Your son is there, and you believe
That he may die 'cause Bush won't leave.
Take comfort hearing Ralph proclaim:
The major parties are the same.

The Virtual Primary

Long before votes are cast in modern presidential elections, elite donors narrow the race by picking a few acceptable candidates, who are then crowned frontrunners for leading the "money primary." But wait—wasn't the Internet supposed to change all this? Now thousands of people can pool relatively small donations to boost a candidate into the first tier, while bloggers promote their favorites to audiences rivaling those of major newspapers. Yet a funny thing happened on the way to the revolution. Internet fundraising has made the competition for early money not only fiercer but even more influential in handicapping the race, because donations are revered as proof of electability and grassroots enthusiasm.

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When Barack Obama raised a whopping $25 million in the first quarter, for example, MSNBC headlined the news as confirmation of his "grassroots power." After Obama pulled in an unprecedented $32.5 million in the second quarter, he said the money proved his team had "built the largest grassroots campaign in history." Never mind that most voters and activists never donate to presidential candidates, and that grassroots campaigns are supposed to emphasize issues important to local activists, not national fundraising. Now if candidates fail to raise big money quickly, they are disregarded before the public ever hears about their positions.

But one powerful group is challenging this system with an alternative to the money primary. MoveOn.org, the organization that pioneered low-dollar Internet fundraising and showered Democrats with more midterm campaign donations than almost any other liberal PAC, is advocating a primary campaign that is downright old-fashioned. A primary based on the issues.

"We have this presidential campaign process that's starting earlier than ever before and in some ways is less about the issues than ever before. It's all horse race all the time," explains Eli Pariser, MoveOn's executive director. Instead of fixating on fundraising or electability, the organization is convening three "virtual" town halls for candidates to address the group's 3.3 million members via YouTube and podcasts. Each event is devoted to a single topic. Candidates field questions directly from MoveOn members, providing "real depth on the issues they care about," Pariser says.

After each gathering, MoveOn members appraise the candidates on the issue at hand. After the Iraq town hall the question was not whom people might vote for on election day—the horse race query that drives most polls and campaign coverage—but simply "which candidate do you believe would be best able to lead the country out of Iraq?" Obama and John Edwards led with 28 and 25 percent, followed by 17 percent for Dennis Kucinich.

In July the second town hall tackled global warming, with 1,300 gatherings around the country coinciding with Al Gore's Live Earth concerts. More than 100,000 people participated, making it the largest MoveOn event since 2004. One-third of participants favored Edwards's approach to the "climate crisis," while Kucinich, Clinton and Obama each drew 15 percent. The final town hall, in October, is on healthcare, coordinated with Michael Moore's documentary *Sicko*, and then MoveOn will help its members put some muscle behind their policy preferences.

Pariser says that in October, the group will run a virtual primary for MoveOn's endorsement—the closest any Democrat can get to becoming the official netroots candidate. Campaign operatives agree that the endorsement could transform the race, cementing a prominent candidate like Edwards, catapulting a liberal underdog like Chris Dodd or igniting and funding a late entry by Al Gore. Unlike the famous out-of-state activists who flocked to help Howard Dean in Iowa, MoveOn's membership, which has almost doubled since 2004, wields the power of voting at home. Take the first two states on the primary calendar: MoveOn boasts 25,000 members in Iowa—about 20 percent of caucus turnout—and 17,000 members in Nevada, where only 9,000 people voted in the 2004 caucus.

Yet the last time MoveOn went down this road, when Dean's antiwar, anti-establishment campaign united the nascent netroots more than anyone has since, the group never issued an endorsement.

Four years ago this month, MoveOn held its first virtual primary, heralded at the time as a breakthrough for participatory politics. Dean dominated with 44 percent, but he did not break the group's 50 percent threshold for an endorsement, and no runoff was held.

Zack Exley, an organizer who worked on MoveOn's first primary, said the goal was not to endorse one candidate but to challenge the focus on high-dollar fundraising with an alternative indicator of viability. "The money primary, driven by big donors, was the most important first test for candidates," he explained recently, so MoveOn designed its 2003 primary to show that grassroots support could trump monetary support.

John Stauber, an activist and author who has criticized MoveOn for getting too cozy with Democratic leaders, predicts the group will never endorse a presidential candidate, instead opting to avoid any action that could undermine Democratic unity or the party's chances in 2008. Stauber argues that the primary and town halls are basically a brilliant "political marketing" operation to harvest e-mail and raise money, while MoveOn will continue to be "primarily oriented to bashing the Republicans, whipping up support for Democrats and getting online petitions and funding appeals going to keep the netroots alive and the money flowing to Democratic candidates."

Pariser says he hopes MoveOn will endorse a presidential candidate, since this cycle there are "much broader" opportunities for its members to have an impact on the race. But an endorsement is possible only if a strong consensus emerges. He is admirably frank about the limits of decentralized power. "We don't have a lot of resources that aren't our members," Pariser explains, and if they endorsed despite a split in membership, "we'd end up pissing off 49 percent of our list."

None of the candidates in the race look poised to rally such overwhelming support, judging by the town halls and blog straw polls. If MoveOn's process does not culminate in an endorsement, it is unlikely to challenge the influence of the elite-driven money race. Still, the MoveOn primary is shaping up to be more substantive, thoughtful and participatory than the actual presidential primary—even if it's a contest without a winner. ARI MELBER

Ari Melber (amelber@hotmail.com) writes about politics, public policy and Internet activism for The Nation.

Murdoch & the Journal

No one who enjoys even a passing acquaintance with modern media would accept Rupert Murdoch's promise to preserve the editorial independence of a newspaper. Yet the Bancroft family, for a century the hands-off managers of the global economy's newspaper of record, proposes to accept just such a pledge—and $5 billion—for the *Wall Street Journal* and the Dow Jones empire it sits atop. Jim Ottaway Jr., an old-school

(Continued on Page 34)

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Support Their Troops?

Lawrence McGuire, a North Carolinian now teaching in Montpellier, France, organized a meeting of antiwar Americans and various interested French parties there at which I spoke last fall. Since then, we've been discussing off and on the strange fact that while two-thirds of Americans oppose the war in Iraq and want the troops to come home, the antiwar movement is pretty much dead. McGuire had raised the matter of direct solidarity with Iraqis fighting the US presence in Iraq. In other words, support *their* troops:

"I was reading a recent piece by Phyllis Bennis…. She talked about the 'US military casualties' and the 'Iraqi civilian victims' and it struck me that the grand taboo of the antiwar movement is to show the slightest empathy for the resistance fighters in Iraq. They are never mentioned as people for whom we should show concern, much less admiration.

"But of course, if you are going to sympathize with the US soldiers, who are fighting a war of aggression, then surely you should also sympathize with the soldiers who are fighting for their homeland. Perhaps not until the antiwar movement starts to some degree recognizing that they should include 'the Iraqi resistance fighters' in their pantheon of victims (in addition to US soldiers and Iraqi civilians) will there be the necessary critical mass to have a real movement."

Now, there are many evident reasons why the direct solidarity with resistance fighters visible in the Vietnam antiwar struggle and the Central American anti-intervention movement has not been visible in the movement opposing the Iraq War. The "war on terror" means—and was designed to mean—that any group in the United States with detectable ties to or relations with Iraqi resistance movements would be in line for savage legal reprisals under the terms of the Patriot Act. Another important factor: The contours of the Iraqi resistance are murky and in some aspects unappetizing to secular progressives in the West, or so they virtuously claim. But such cavils were familiar in the 1960s and '80s too, as huge chunks of the solidarity movement found endless reasons to distance themselves from the Vietnamese NLF or the Nicaraguan FSLN. That said, ignorance about the Iraqi resistance is somewhat forgivable. This time there has been no Wilfrid Burchett reporting from behind the lines, and that has had consequences of the kind McGuire sketches out above.

The personal aspect of international political solidarity is not just the stuff of nostalgic anecdote. In the late 1980s the Central American resistance was constantly among us here in the United States in physical form. While Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo worked the Hollywood liberal circuit, the sanctuary movement sheltered militants and sympathizers in churches across the country and defied federal efforts to seize them. Labor organizers from El Salvador traveled across North America from local to friendly local. I can remember being at a picnic of a union local striking a door factory in Springfield, Oregon, southeast of Eugene, where a man from a radical labor coalition in El Salvador got a cordial reception from the strikers and their families as they swapped stories of their respective battles.

The other day I found in a box of old papers in my garage a directory to "sister cities"—towns in the United States that had paired with beleaguered towns in Nicaragua, regularly exchanging delegations. The directory was as thick as a medium-sized telephone book. There were hundreds of such pairings, and many were the individual pairings they led to. People's Express, the "backpackers' airline," as it used to be called, would shuttle demure sisters in the struggle from Vermont or the Pacific Northwest to Miami, for onward passage to Managua and a rendezvous with some valiant son of Sandino or downtrodden Nica sister, liberated by North American inversion from the oppressions of Latin patriarchy.

While many soldiers deployed in Iraq have been compelled to serve multiple tours of duty, there is no draft, a prime factor in stoking the Vietnam antiwar movement. The absence of a draft is certainly a major reason for the weakness of this antiwar movement. But even without a draft, in the Reagan years there was a very lively anti-intervention culture.

It looked as though just such a vibrant left antiwar movement was flaring into life in 2003. But many of its troops veered into 9/11 kookdom, shifted to whining about global warming or vested all hopes in a Democratic presidency after 2008. The bulk of the antiwar movement has become subservient to the Democratic Party and to the agenda of its prime candidates for the presidency in 2008, with Hillary Clinton in the lead.

To describe the antiwar movement in its effective form is really to mention a few good efforts—the anti-recruitment campaigns, the tours by those who have lost children in Iraq—or three or four brave souls—Cindy Sheehan, who single-handedly reanimated the antiwar movement and now vows to run against House Speaker Nancy Pelosi unless the latter stops blocking impeachment proceedings, or radical Catholic Kathy Kelly, or Medea Benjamin and her Code Pink activists, who have occupied Clinton's office and ambushed her on YouTube.

A simple question: Has the end of America's war on Iraq been brought closer by the Democrats' recapture of Congress in November 2006? The answer is that when it comes to the actual war, which has led to the bloody disintegration of Iraqi society, the death of some 3,000 Iraqis a month, the death and mutilation of US soldiers every day, nothing at all has happened since the Democrats rode to victory in November courtesy of popular revulsion against the war. I don't think there is much of an independent left in America today. If there was, then Lawrence McGuire's observation about the lack of solidarity with the Iraqi resistance wouldn't be so obviously on the mark.

The American people are largely against the war, to the huge embarrassment and distress of the Republican and Democratic leadership. So does it matter that there's not much of an antiwar movement? Very much so. It's how the left, down the years, has learned its internationalist ABCs. ■

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KATHA POLLITT

Pardon Whom?

Dear George W. Bush,

I know you're getting a lot of flak for commuting Scooter Libby's sentence, but I say, Stick to your guns. The man has definitely suffered enough, what with everyone making fun of his nickname and comparing him to Paris Hilton. Besides, as you pointed out, Libby's reputation has been "forever damaged" and what is a public servant without his reputation? He'll have to join that other neocon convict Elliott Abrams, whom your dad pardoned in 1992, in sweeping the floors at Denny's. Oh, I forgot. Abrams isn't pushing a broom, he's your deputy national security adviser. I guess reputation isn't all it used to be, and if David Brooks can't figure out how to blame that on liberals, feminism and divorce he's not the man I take him for.

Now that you're taking up compassion—Libby has young children, you reminded the heartless Democrats—you'll find that he isn't the only convict who could use a helping hand. It's too late for the 152 men and one woman you sent to the death chamber when you were governor of Texas, but not for the staggering number of people doing federal time as part of the misguided, destructive and futile "war on drugs." Did you know that roughly 1,600 people are arrested every day for marijuana? As a former alcoholic you have to admit it's ridiculous to come down like a ton of bricks on the inoffensive herb while liquor floods the land, causing thousands of deaths each year. And did you know that possession of one gram of crack still commands the same sentence as 100 grams of cocaine, even though there's little difference between these substances? According to the Sentencing Project, as of this year, 97,597 people were serving time in federal prisons for drug offenses. Add to that the roughly 250,000 in state prisons and you have one reason the United States has 2.2 million people in prison—more than any other country. (You also have the main reason that rates of incarceration for women have skyrocketed—and let's not forget that two-thirds of them are mothers, many of them single mothers, with children just as cute as the Libby kids.)

The vast majority of drug offenders are not "kingpins"—how many kingpins could there be? They're small-time dealers, often addicts themselves, or even those dealers' relatives or girlfriends, people who were so low down in the food chain they couldn't make a bargain with prosecutors, like those scruffy street people are always doing on *Law & Order*. People like Sharvonne McKinnon, mother of two, serving twenty years for minor involvement in her boyfriend's drug business, or Lidia Ramos, serving a ten-year minimum term for driving her boyfriend's car a few blocks; unbeknownst to herself, she says, it had ten kilograms of cocaine in the trunk and the destination was a drug deal. Foolish, yes. Guilty? A jury thought so. A jury thought Libby was guilty, too. You don't think compassionate conservatism means compassion just for conservatives, do you? At the website of Families Against Mandatory Minimums (www.famm.org), you can read more about these prisoners and others like them—some of them ordinary poor people trapped where youthful folly collides with draconian laws, people not so different from the younger members of your own extended family, except for the "poor" and "laws" part. Others are middle-class, like Richard Paey, currently serving a twenty-five-year mandatory minimum sentence on charges stemming from his need for pain medication after a serious back injury. Maybe you could ask Rush Limbaugh about that one!

But perhaps you are looking for one big compassionate gesture that would help a lot of people all at once and not require asking your friends and relatives embarrassing questions. With one stroke of your pen, you could pardon 200,000 young people. These are the youths who have fallen afoul of the drug provision of the 1998 Higher Education Act, which bars federal student aid to anyone convicted of a state or federal drug offense. That includes everything from government scholarships to work-study jobs. Unlike Libby, a middle-aged high-powered lawyer of considerable worldliness and wealth, these are just teenagers, who are famous for being idiots, and they violated laws that are broken every day by millions of normal, upstanding, productive citizens, including many Republicans. I don't think that can be said of lying to the FBI. Most people, even most Republicans, take that one pretty seriously. Also unlike Libby, these offenders have already paid their debt to society. Now they are dropping out of college, or not going—unless, of course, their parents can afford to pay full freight. Talk about unintended consequences—a law meant to warn kids away from drugs ends up keeping them out of college, but only if they're poor. You always say no child should be left behind. Pardon them, and people might begin to believe you actually mean it.

But why stop there—why not go all the way? Like Nixon going to China, you, the unofficial head of the religious right, could compassionately, conservatively begin commuting the whole mess that is the "war on drugs." It's been going on for decades, and what have we got to show for it? A bloated prison system, destroyed families, fractured communities, especially black communities. Mass incarceration of black men has fueled nearly every problem the black community has—unemployment, gangs, violence, guns, the educational achievement gap, the absence of men from the lives of their children, HIV, hopelessness. Meanwhile, drugs are as widely available as ever, and millions of people still like to use them. As the most unpopular President in history—your approval rating is down to 29 percent, according to the latest NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll—what have you got to lose? Why not go down in history as the leader who admitted that America made a colossal mistake?

Think of it as a warm-up for acknowledging that other disastrous war—the one Libby helped you start in Iraq.

Just say yes!

Katha ■

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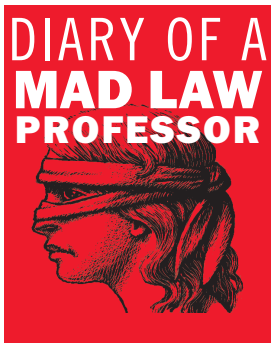
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Mourning in America



Years ago, at a conference for lawyers, the topic of Martin Luther King's assassination came up. People began to recount where they were when it happened. One woman recalled that she was in high school in Texas and that they were working on the school play that day. "We decided that the show must go on. I think he would have wanted us to move on." She paused. "We weren't one of those schools that cheered at the news."

This particular revelation brought forward a heretofore invisible divide. Although everyone professed commitment to the legacy of the civil rights movement, there were hidden fault lines of passion among us. Many of the white participants, like the woman from Texas, had been in places where King's assassination was remarked upon but generally passed over, hastily tucked into the background. For the black participants, his death was seismic. Even though King was past the height of his popularity within the black community, the assassination was a deeply disturbing harbinger of the riots to come, of unspeakable grief, of welling anger, a reminder of an endless array of martyrs. It was one of the few times I saw my father cry.

I have been thinking of that divide in perception in the wake of the Supreme Court's recent round of decisions, all signaling a sharp turn to the right. There will be reverberations for many years from the opinions regarding abortion, employment discrimination and price-fixing. But the ruling that I find most grievous in its implications is the holding in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*. I have discussed in this column the absurdity of a rule that equates voluntary integration programs with legalized segregation so I won't repeat myself now, much as I want to. What concerns me at the moment is the general lack of outcry that has met the decision that public school districts cannot take voluntary action to overcome racial inequality. This represents, for all intents and purposes, the overturning of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Yet the response in many quarters has been to put a positive spin on it. *At least it was a plurality decision. At least Justice Kennedy allowed that diversity is an interest.*

The July 1 *New York Times* Week in Review carried an upbeat analysis by Jeffrey Rosen, headlined "Can a Law Change a Society?" It was representative of many of the analyses that filled the papers of record. Rosen interviewed five constitutional law professors about the long-term impact of the ruling. There were a number of assumptions built into the structure of the interviews, assumptions that incorporated unquestioningly the premises of Chief Justice John Roberts's ruling. The most conspicuous was that there are two clear "sides" to the debate, in which "colorblindness" signifies the antithesis of "diversity." Rosen writes that "the effects of last week's decision may be limited by the fact that American society is divided on just how colorblind or integrated society should be." But King used colorblindness to mean a lack of prejudice, an acceptance of diversity and an openness to racial, ethnic and religious variety. Colorblindness, as Roberts and Rosen use it, means that any openness to race as a social factor is by itself the vice of prejudice. Diversity, rather than being the product of colorblindness, is now a pernicious form of color-consciousness, no matter whether in pursuit of integration or segregation. "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race," wrote Roberts in his decision. There's a subtext of silliness to this, which in essence makes any seeing of race precisely equivalent to racism.

Another theme in Rosen's piece is that *Brown* didn't really make that much difference in US history, so this case won't either. According to the *New York Times*, Michael Klarman of the University of Virginia says that "just as the court couldn't bring about integration on its own in 1954, so it won't be able to mandate colorblindness on its own today." David Strauss of the University of Chicago says that he "wouldn't expect a large-scale retreat from what public schools have tried." Berkeley's John Yoo, architect of Bush's torture policies and much of the Patriot Act, was similarly chipper: "School administrators and bureaucrats are so heavily invested in the idea of diversity that they will try an amazing array of policies to get around the ban of the use of race."

Rosen concludes his piece with this observation: "In the end, the Supreme Court throughout its history has rarely precipitated social transformation on its own; instead it has been most effective when it acts in conjunction with the president, Congress and ultimately a majority of the country." But this President knew exactly what he was doing when he appointed Roberts and Alito, as did his father in appointing Thomas and Scalia. Congress waved their nominations through. The Office of Civil Rights under Bush has moved away from prosecuting civil rights cases involving race and gender and has spent more of its resources pursuing discrimination cases against religious groups (ironically all while funneling federal funds to churches that openly discriminate in hiring, based on belief). And while the Supreme Court may force schools and employers to turn a blind eye to racism's ruinous cost of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty, the "war on terror" has reinvigorated profiling by race, religion, ethnicity and lord-knows-what-else. We seem well on our way to resurrecting a dual society, at one level of which no one sees a thing—the show must go on, so to speak. But some of the rest live in a shadow nation where race is a mark of unspeakable yet indelible consequence.

As for how "a majority of the country will respond," the Pacific Legal Foundation, lawyers for the white parents in these cases, says: "With these decisions, an estimated 1,000 school districts around the country that are sending the wrong message about race to kids will have to stop." The wrong message? Most of the students in the New York City public schools are black or Hispanic; 50 percent of them do not graduate from high school. The statistics are similar in many places around the country. If no one's vulgar enough to cheer about this, maybe we should be wondering why no one's crying either. ■

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ARTICLES

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THE OTHER WAR

BY CHRIS HEDGES AND LAILA AL-ARIAN

Over the past several months *The Nation* has interviewed fifty combat veterans of the Iraq War from around the United States in an effort to investigate the effects of the four-year-old occupation on average Iraqi civilians. These combat veterans, some of whom bear deep emotional and physical scars, and many of whom have come to oppose the occupation, gave vivid, on-the-record accounts. They described a brutal side of the war rarely seen on television screens or chronicled in newspaper accounts.

Their stories, recorded and typed into thousands of pages of transcripts, reveal disturbing patterns of behavior by American troops in Iraq. Dozens of those interviewed witnessed Iraqi civilians, including children, dying from American firepower. Some participated in such killings; others treated or investigated civilian casualties after the fact. Many also heard such stories, in detail, from members of their unit. The soldiers, sailors and marines emphasized that not all troops took part in indiscriminate killings. Many said that these acts were perpetrated by a minority. But they nevertheless described such acts as common and said they often go unreported—and almost always go unpunished.

Court cases, such as the ones surrounding the massacre in Haditha and the rape and murder of a 14-year-old in Mahmudiya, and news stories in the *Washington Post*, *Time*, the London *Independent* and elsewhere based on Iraqi accounts have begun to hint at the wide extent of the attacks on civilians. Human rights groups have issued reports, such as Human Rights Watch's *Hearts and Minds: Post-war Civilian Deaths in Baghdad Caused by U.S. Forces*, packed with detailed incidents that suggest that the killing of Iraqi civilians by occupation forces is more common than has been acknowledged by military authorities.

This *Nation* investigation marks the first time so many on-the-record, named eyewitnesses from within the US military have been assembled in one place to openly corroborate these assertions.

While some veterans said civilian shootings were routinely investigated by the military, many more said such inquiries were rare. "I mean, you physically could not do an investigation every time a civilian was wounded or killed because it just happens a lot and you'd spend all your time doing that," said Marine Reserve Lieut. Jonathan Morgenstein, 35, of Arlington, Virginia.

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He served from August 2004 to March 2005 in Ramadi with a Marine Corps civil affairs unit supporting a combat team with the Second Marine Expeditionary Brigade. (All interviewees are identified by the rank they held during the period of service they recount here; some have since been promoted or demoted.)

Veterans said the culture of this counterinsurgency war, in which most Iraqi civilians were assumed to be hostile, made it difficult for soldiers to sympathize with their victims—at least until they returned home and had a chance to reflect.

"I guess while I was there, the general attitude was, A dead Iraqi is just another dead Iraqi," said Spc. Jeff Englehart, 26, of Grand Junction, Colorado. Specialist Englehart served with the Third Brigade, First Infantry Division, in Baquba, about thirty-five miles northeast of Baghdad, for a year beginning in February 2004. "You know, so what?… The soldiers honestly thought we were trying to help the people and they were mad because it was almost like a betrayal. Like here we are trying to help you, here I am, you know, thousands of miles away from home and my family, and I have to be here for a year and work every day on these missions. Well, we're trying to help you and you just turn around and try to kill us."

'An IED went off, gun-happy soldiers started shooting and a baby got hit. This baby looked at me like, Why do I have a bullet in my leg?'

He said it was only "when they get home, in dealing with veteran issues and meeting other veterans, it seems like the guilt really takes place, takes root, then."

The Iraq War is a vast and complicated enterprise. In this investigation of alleged military misconduct, *The Nation* focused on a few key elements of the occupation, asking veterans to explain in detail their experiences operating patrols and supply convoys, setting up checkpoints, conducting raids and arresting suspects. From these collected snapshots a common theme emerged. Fighting in densely populated urban areas has led to the indiscriminate use of force and the deaths at the hands of occupation troops of thousands of innocents.

Many of these veterans returned home deeply disturbed by the disparity between the reality of the war and the way it is portrayed by the US government and American media. The war the vets described is a dark and even depraved enterprise, one that bears a powerful resemblance to other misguided and brutal colonial wars and occupations, from the French occupation of Algeria to the American war in Vietnam and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

"I'll tell you the point where I really turned," said Spc. Michael Harmon, 24, a medic from Brooklyn. He served a thirteen-month tour beginning in April 2003 with the 167th Armor Regiment, Fourth Infantry Division, in Al-Rashidiya, a small town near Baghdad. "I go out to the scene and [there was] this little, you know, pudgy little 2-year-old child with the cute little pudgy legs, and I look and she has a bullet through her leg.… An IED [improvised explosive device] went off, the gun-happy soldiers just started shooting anywhere and the baby got hit. And this baby looked at me, wasn't crying, wasn't anything, it just looked at me like—I know she couldn't speak. It might sound crazy, but she was like asking me why. You know, Why do I have a bullet in my leg?… I was just like, This is—this is it. This is ridiculous."

Much of the resentment toward Iraqis described to *The Nation* by veterans was confirmed in a report released May 4 by the Pentagon. According to the survey, conducted by the Office of the Surgeon General of the US Army Medical Command, just 47 percent of soldiers and 38 percent of marines agreed that civilians should be treated with dignity and respect. Only 55 percent of soldiers and 40 percent of marines said they would report a unit member who had killed or injured "an innocent noncombatant."

These attitudes reflect the limited contact occupation troops said they had with Iraqis. They rarely saw their enemy. They lived bottled up in heavily fortified compounds that often came under mortar attack. They only ventured outside their compounds ready for combat. The mounting frustration of fighting an elusive enemy and the devastating effect of roadside bombs, with their steady toll of American dead and wounded, led many troops to declare an open war on all Iraqis.

Veterans described reckless firing once they left their compounds. Some shot holes into cans of gasoline being sold along the roadside and then tossed grenades into the pools of gas to set them ablaze. Others opened fire on children. These shootings often enraged Iraqi witnesses.

In June 2003 Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejía's unit was pressed by a furious crowd in Ramadi. Sergeant Mejía, 31, a National Guardsman from Miami, served for six months beginning in April 2003 with the 1-124 Infantry Battalion, Fifty-Third Infantry Brigade. His squad opened fire on an Iraqi youth holding a grenade, riddling his body with bullets. Sergeant Mejía checked his clip afterward and calculated that he had personally fired eleven rounds into the young man.

"The frustration that resulted from our inability to get back at those who were attacking us led to tactics that seemed designed simply to punish the local population that was supporting them," Sergeant Mejía said.

We heard a few reports, in one case corroborated by photographs, that some soldiers had so lost their moral compass

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Chris Hedges, the author of War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning, *spent two decades as a foreign correspondent covering conflicts in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans. He worked most of that time for the* New York Times, *where he was one of a team of reporters who won the Pulitzer Prize in 2002 for their coverage of global terrorism. He received the 2002 Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism. He is a senior fellow at The Nation Institute and a Lannan Literary Fellow.* • *Laila Al-Arian is a freelance journalist based in New York City. A graduate of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, she has interned for* USA Today *and* The Nation *and has written for United Press International and* The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs. • *Eugene Richards, a fellow at The Nation Institute, is an award-winning magazine photographer and writer. He has written books on poverty in America, emergency medicine, breast cancer, and the war on drugs. His most recent book is* The Fat Baby. • *This article will form the basis of* Collateral Damage, *forthcoming from Nation Books. Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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that they'd mocked or desecrated Iraqi corpses. One photo, among dozens turned over to *The Nation* during the investigation, shows an American soldier acting as if he is about to eat the spilled brains of a dead Iraqi man with his brown plastic Army-issue spoon.

"Take a picture of me and this motherfucker," a soldier who had been in Sergeant Mejía's squad said as he put his arm around the corpse. Sergeant Mejía recalls that the shroud covering the body fell away, revealing that the young man was wearing only his pants. There was a bullet hole in his chest.

"Damn, they really fucked you up, didn't they?" the soldier laughed.

The scene, Sergeant Mejía said, was witnessed by the dead man's brothers and cousins.

In the sections that follow, snipers, medics, military police, artillerymen, officers and others recount their experiences serving in places as diverse as Mosul in the north, Samarra in the Sunni Triangle, Nasiriya in the south and Baghdad in the center, during 2003, 2004 and 2005. Their stories capture the impact of their units on Iraqi civilians.

Raids

"So we get started on this day, this one in particular," recalled Spc. Philip Chrystal, 23, of Reno, who said he raided between twenty and thirty Iraqi homes during an eleven-month tour in Kirkuk and Hawija that ended in October 2005, serving with the Third Battalion, 116th Cavalry Brigade. "It starts with the psy-ops vehicles out there, you know, with the big speakers playing a message in Arabic or Farsi or Kurdish or whatever they happen to be, saying, basically, saying, Put your weapons, if you have them, next to the front door in your house. Please come outside, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And we had Apaches flying over for security, if they're needed, and it's also a good show of force. And we're running around, and they—we'd done a few houses by this point, and I was with my platoon leader, my squad leader and maybe a couple other people.

"And we were approaching this one house," he said. "In this farming area, they're, like, built up into little courtyards. So they have, like, the main house, common area. They have, like, a kitchen and then they have a storage shed–type deal. And we're approaching, and they had a family dog. And it was barking ferociously, 'cause it's doing its job. And my squad leader, just out of nowhere, just shoots it. And he didn't—motherfucker—he shot it and it went in the jaw and exited out. So I see this dog—I'm a huge animal lover; I love animals—and this dog has, like, these eyes on it and he's running around spraying blood all over the place. And like, you know, What the hell is going on? The family is sitting right there, with three little children and a mom and a dad, horrified. And I'm at a loss for words. And so, I yell at him. I'm, like, What the fuck are you doing? And so the dog's yelping. It's crying out without a jaw. And I'm looking at the family, and they're just, you know, dead scared. And so I told them, I was like, Fucking shoot it, you know? At least kill it, because that can't be fixed….

"And—I actually get tears from just saying this right now, but—and I had tears then, too—and I'm looking at the kids and they are so scared. So I got the interpreter over with me and, you know, I get my wallet out and I gave them twenty bucks, because that's what I had. And, you know, I had him give it to them and told them that I'm so sorry that asshole did that.

"Was a report ever filed about it?" he asked. "Was anything ever done? Any punishment ever dished out? No, absolutely not."

Specialist Chrystal said such incidents were "very common."

According to interviews with twenty-four veterans who participated in such raids, they are a relentless reality for Iraqis under occupation. The American forces, stymied by poor intelligence, invade neighborhoods where insurgents operate, bursting into homes in the hope of surprising fighters or finding weapons. But such catches, they said, are rare. Far more common were stories in which soldiers assaulted a home, destroyed property in their futile search and left terrorized civilians struggling to repair the damage and begin the long torment of trying

A Note on Methodology

The Nation interviewed fifty combat veterans, including forty soldiers, eight marines and two sailors, over a period of seven months beginning in July 2006. To find veterans willing to speak on the record about their experiences in Iraq, we sent queries to organizations dedicated to US troops and their families, including Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the antiwar groups Military Families Speak Out, Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War and the prowar group Vets for Freedom. The leaders of IVAW and Paul Rieckhoff, the founder of IAVA, were especially helpful in putting us in touch with Iraq War veterans. Finally, we found veterans through word of mouth, as many of those we interviewed referred us to their military friends.

To verify their military service, when possible we obtained a copy of each interviewee's DD Form 214, or the Certificate of Release or Discharge From Active Duty, and in all cases confirmed their service with the branch of the military in which they were enlisted. Nineteen interviews were conducted in person, while the rest were done over the phone; all were tape-recorded and transcribed; all but five interviewees (most of those currently on active duty) were independently contacted by fact checkers to confirm basic facts about their service in Iraq. Of those interviewed, fourteen served in Iraq from 2003 to 2004, twenty from 2004 to 2005 and two from 2005 to 2006. Of the eleven veterans whose tours lasted less than one year, nine served in 2003, while the others served in 2004 and 2005.

The ranks of the veterans we interviewed ranged from private to captain, though only a handful were officers. The veterans served throughout Iraq, but mostly in the country's most volatile areas, such as Baghdad, Tikrit, Mosul, Falluja and Samarra.

During the course of the interview process, five veterans turned over photographs from Iraq, some of them graphic, to corroborate their claims.

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to find family members who were hauled away as suspects.

Raids normally took place between midnight and 5 AM, according to Sgt. John Bruhns, 29, of Philadelphia, who estimates that he took part in raids of nearly 1,000 Iraqi homes. He served in Baghdad and Abu Ghraib, a city infamous for its prison, located twenty miles west of the capital, with the Third Brigade, First Armored Division, First Battalion, for one year beginning in April 2003. His descriptions of raid procedures closely echoed those of eight other veterans who served in locations as diverse as Kirkuk, Samarra, Baghdad, Mosul and Tikrit.

"You want to catch them off guard," Sergeant Bruhns explained. "You want to catch them in their sleep." About ten troops were involved in each raid, he said, with five stationed outside and the rest searching the home.

Once they were in front of the home, troops wearing Kevlar helmets and flak vests, some with grenade launchers mounted on their weapons, kicked the door in, according to Sergeant Bruhns, who dispassionately described the procedure:

'We approached one house, and they had a family dog barking ferociously, doing its job. And my squad leader, out of nowhere, just shoots it.'

"You run in. And if there's lights, you turn them on—if the lights are working. If not, you've got flashlights…. You leave one rifle team outside while one rifle team goes inside. Each rifle team leader has a headset on with an earpiece and a microphone where he can communicate with the other rifle team leader that's outside.

"You go up the stairs. You grab the man of the house. You rip him out of bed in front of his wife. You put him up against the wall. You have junior-level troops, PFCs [privates first class], specialists will run into the other rooms and grab the family, and you'll group them all together. Then you go into a room and you tear the room to shreds and you make sure there's no weapons or anything that they can use to attack us.

"You get the interpreter and you get the man of the home, and you have him at gunpoint, and you'll ask the interpreter to ask him: 'Do you have any weapons? Do you have any anti-US propaganda, anything at all—anything—anything in here that would lead us to believe that you are somehow involved in insurgent activity or anti–coalition forces activity?'

"Normally they'll say no, because that's normally the truth," Sergeant Bruhns said. "So what you'll do is you'll take his sofa cushions and you'll dump them. If he has a couch, you'll turn the couch upside down. You'll go into the fridge, if he has a fridge, and you'll throw everything on the floor, and you'll take his drawers and you'll dump them…. You'll open up his closet and you'll throw all the clothes on the floor and basically leave his house looking like a hurricane just hit it.

"And if you find something, then you'll detain him. If not, you'll say, 'Sorry to disturb you. Have a nice evening.' So you've just humiliated this man in front of his entire family and terrorized his entire family and you've destroyed his home. And then you go right next door and you do the same thing in a hundred homes."

Each raid, or "cordon and search" operation, as they are sometimes called, involved five to twenty homes, he said. Following a spate of attacks on soldiers in a particular area, commanders would normally order infantrymen on raids to look for weapons caches, ammunition or materials for making IEDs. Each Iraqi family was allowed to keep one AK-47 at home, but according to Bruhns, those found with extra weapons were arrested and detained and the operation classified a "success," even if it was clear that no one in the home was an insurgent.

Before a raid, according to descriptions by several veterans, soldiers typically "quarantined" the area by barring anyone from coming in or leaving. In pre-raid briefings, Sergeant Bruhns said, military commanders often told their troops the neighborhood they were ordered to raid was "a hostile area with a high level of insurgency" and that it had been taken over by former Baathists or Al Qaeda terrorists.

"So you have all these troops, and they're all wound up," said Sergeant Bruhns. "And a lot of these troops think once they kick down the door there's going to be people on the inside waiting for them with weapons to start shooting at them."

Sgt. Dustin Flatt, 33, of Denver, estimates he raided "thousands" of homes in Tikrit, Samarra and Mosul. He served with the Eighteenth Infantry Brigade, First Infantry Division, for one year beginning in February 2004. "We scared the living Jesus out of them every time we went through every house," he said.

Spc. Ali Aoun, 23, a National Guardsman from New York City, said he conducted perimeter security in nearly 100 raids while serving in Sadr City with the Eighty-Ninth Military Police Brigade for eleven months starting in April 2004. When soldiers raided a home, he said, they first cordoned it off with Humvees. Soldiers guarded the entrance to make sure no one escaped. If an entire town was being raided, in large-scale operations, it too was cordoned off, said Spc. Garett Reppenhagen, 32, of Manitou Springs, Colorado, a cavalry scout and sniper with the 263rd Armor Battalion, First Infantry Division, who was deployed to Baquba for a year in February 2004.

Staff Sgt. Timothy John Westphal, 31, of Denver, recalled one summer night in 2004, the temperature an oppressive 110 degrees, when he and forty-four other US soldiers raided a sprawling farm on the outskirts of Tikrit. Sergeant Westphal, who served there for a yearlong tour with the Eighteenth Infantry Brigade, First Infantry Division, beginning in February 2004, said he was told some men on the farm were insurgents. As a mechanized infantry squad leader, Sergeant Westphal led the mission to secure the main house, while fifteen men swept the property. Sergeant Westphal and his men hopped the wall surrounding the house, fully expecting to come face to face with armed insurgents.

"We had our flashlights and...I told my guys, 'On the count of three, just hit them with your lights and let's see what we've got here. Wake 'em up!'"

Sergeant Westphal's flashlight was mounted on his M-4 carbine rifle, a smaller version of the M-16, so in pointing his light at the clump of sleepers on the floor he was also pointing his weapon at them. Sergeant Westphal first turned his light on a man who appeared to be in his mid-60s.

"The man screamed this gut-wrenching, blood-curdling, just horrified scream," Sergeant Westphal recalled. "I've never heard

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Sgt. John Bruhns, 29, of Philadelphia

anything like that. I mean, the guy was absolutely terrified. I can imagine what he was thinking, having lived under Saddam."

The farm's inhabitants were not insurgents but a family sleeping outside for relief from the stifling heat, and the man Sergeant Westphal had frightened awake was the patriarch.

"Sure enough, as we started to peel back the layers of all these people sleeping, I mean, it was him, maybe two guys…either his sons or nephews or whatever, and the rest were all women and children," Sergeant Westphal said. "We didn't find anything.

"I can tell you hundreds of stories about things like that and they would all pretty much be like the one I just told you. Just a different family, a different time, a different circumstance."

For Sergeant Westphal, that night was a turning point. "I just remember thinking to myself, I just brought terror to someone else under the American flag, and that's just not what I joined the Army to do," he said.

Intelligence

Fifteen soldiers we spoke with told us the information that spurred these raids was typically gathered through human intelligence—and that it was usually incorrect. Eight said it was common for Iraqis to use American troops to settle family disputes, tribal rivalries or personal vendettas. Sgt. Jesus Bocanegra, 25, of Weslaco, Texas, was a scout in Tikrit with the Fourth Infantry Division during a yearlong tour that ended in March 2004. In late 2003, Sergeant Bocanegra raided a middle-aged man's home in Tikrit because his son had told the Army his father was an insurgent. After thoroughly searching the man's house, soldiers found nothing and later discovered that the son simply wanted money his father had buried at the farm.

After persistently acting on such false leads, Sergeant Bocanegra, who raided Iraqi homes in more than fifty operations, said soldiers began to anticipate the innocence of those they raided. "People would make jokes about it, even before we'd go into a raid, like, Oh fucking we're gonna get the wrong house," he said. "'Cause it would always happen. We always got the wrong house." Specialist Chrystal said that he and his platoon leader shared a joke of their own: Every time he raided a house, he would radio in and say, "This is, you know, Thirty-One Lima. Yeah, I found the weapons of mass destruction in here."

Sergeant Bruhns said he questioned the authenticity of the intelligence he received because Iraqi informants were paid by the US military for tips. On one occasion, an Iraqi tipped off Sergeant Bruhns's unit that a small Syrian resistance organization, responsible for killing a number of US troops, was holed up in a house. "They're waiting for us to show up and there will be a lot of shooting," Sergeant Bruhns recalled being told.

As the Alpha Company team leader, Sergeant Bruhns was supposed to be the first person in the door. Skeptical, he refused. "So I said, 'If you're so confident that there are a bunch of Syrian terrorists, insurgents…in there, why in the world are you going to send me and three guys in the front door, because chances are I'm not going to be able to squeeze the trigger before I get shot.'" Sergeant Bruhns facetiously suggested they pull an M-2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle up to the house and shoot a missile through the front window to exterminate the enemy

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fighters his commanders claimed were inside. They instead diminished the aggressiveness of the raid. As Sergeant Bruhns ran security out front, his fellow soldiers smashed the windows and kicked down the doors to find "a few little kids, a woman and an old man."

In late summer 2005, in a village on the outskirts of Kirkuk, Specialist Chrystal searched a compound with two Iraqi police officers. A friendly man in his mid-30s escorted Specialist Chrystal and others in his unit around the property, where the man lived with his parents, wife and children, making jokes to lighten the mood. As they finished searching—they found nothing—a lieutenant from his company approached Specialist Chrystal: "What the hell were you doing?" he asked. "Well, we just searched the house and it's clear," Specialist Chrystal said. The lieutenant told Specialist Chrystal that his friendly guide was "one of the targets" of the raid. "Apparently he'd been dimed out by somebody as being an insurgent," Specialist Chrystal said. "For that mission, they'd only handed out the target sheets to officers, and officers aren't there with the rest of the troops." Specialist Chrystal said he felt "humiliated" because his assessment that the man posed no threat was deemed irrelevant and the man was arrested. Shortly afterward, he posted himself in a fighting vehicle for the rest of the mission.

Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejía, 31, of Miami

Sgt. Larry Cannon, 27, of Salt Lake City, a Bradley gunner with the Eighteenth Infantry Brigade, First Infantry Division, served a yearlong tour in several cities in Iraq, including Tikrit, Samarra and Mosul, beginning in February 2004. He estimates that he searched more than a hundred homes in Tikrit and found the raids fruitless and maddening. "We would go on one raid of a house and that guy would say, 'No, it's not me, but I know where that guy is.' And...he'd take us to the next house where this target was supposedly at, and then that guy's like, 'No, it's not me. I know where he is, though.' And we'd drive around all night and go from raid to raid to raid."

"I can't really fault military intelligence," said Specialist Reppenhagen, who said he raided thirty homes in and around Baquba. "It was always a guessing game. We're in a country where we don't speak the language. We're light on interpreters. It's just impossible to really get anything. All you're going off is a pattern of what's happened before and hoping that the pattern doesn't change."

Sgt. Geoffrey Millard, 26, of Buffalo, New York, served in Tikrit with the Rear Operations Center, Forty-Second Infantry Division, for one year beginning in October 2004. He said combat troops had neither the training nor the resources to investigate tips before acting on them. "We're not police," he said. "We don't go around like detectives and ask questions. We kick down doors, we go in, we grab people."

First Lieut. Brady Van Engelen, 26, of Washington, DC, said the Army depended on less than reliable sources because options were limited. He served as a survey platoon leader with the First Armored Division in Baghdad's volatile Adhamiya district for eight months beginning in September 2003. "That's really about the only thing we had," he said. "A lot of it was just going off a whim, a hope that it worked out," he said. "Maybe one in ten worked out."

Sergeant Bruhns said he uncovered illegal material about 10 percent of the time, an estimate echoed by other veterans. "We did find small materials for IEDs, like maybe a small piece of the wire, the detonating cord," said Sergeant Cannon. "We never found real bombs in the houses." In the thousand or so raids he conducted during his time in Iraq, Sergeant Westphal said, he came into contact with only four "hard-core insurgents."

Arrests

Even with such slim pretexts for arrest, some soldiers said, any Iraqis arrested during a raid were treated with extreme suspicion. Several reported seeing military-age men detained without evidence or abused during questioning. Eight veterans said the men would typically be bound with plastic handcuffs, their heads covered with sandbags. While the Army officially banned the practice of hooding prisoners after the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, five soldiers indicated that it continued.

"You weren't allowed to, but it was still done," said Sergeant Cannon. "I remember in Mosul [in January 2005], we had guys in a raid and they threw them in the back of a Bradley," shackled and hooded. "These guys were really throwing up," he contin-

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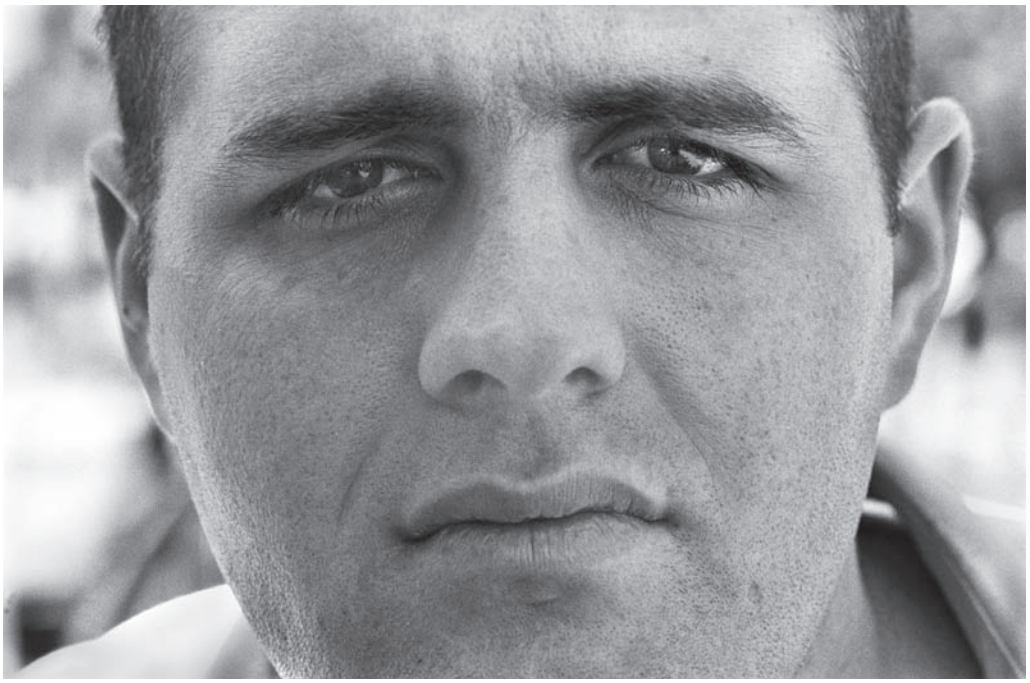
ued. "They were so sick and nervous. And sometimes, they were peeing on themselves. Can you imagine if people could just come into your house and take you in front of your family screaming? And if you actually were innocent but had no way to prove that? It would be a scary, scary thing." Specialist Reppenhagen said he had only a vague idea about what constituted contraband during a raid. "Sometimes we didn't even have a translator, so we find some poster with Muqtada al-Sadr, Sistani or something, we don't know what it says on it. We just apprehend them, document that thing as evidence and send it on down the road and let other people deal with it."



Sgt. Patrick Campbell, 29, of Camarillo, California

Sergeant Bruhns, Sergeant Bocanegra and others said physical abuse of Iraqis during raids was common. "It was just soldiers being soldiers," Sergeant Bocanegra said. "You give them a lot of, too much, power that they never had before, and before you know it they're the ones kicking these guys while they're handcuffed. And then by you not catching [insurgents], when you do have someone say, 'Oh, this is a guy planting a roadside bomb'—and you don't even know if it's him or not—you just go in there and kick the shit out of him and take him in the back of a five-ton—take him to jail."

Tens of thousands of Iraqis—military officials estimate more than 60,000—have been arrested and detained since the beginning of the occupation, leaving their families to navigate a complex, chaotic prison system in order to find them. Veterans we interviewed said the majority of detainees they encountered were either innocent or guilty of only minor infractions.

Sergeant Bocanegra said during the first two months of the war he was instructed to detain Iraqis based on their attire alone. "They were wearing Arab clothing and military-style boots, they were considered enemy combatants and you would cuff 'em and take 'em in," he said. "When you put something like that so broad, you're bound to have, out of a hundred, you're going to have ten at least that were, you know what I mean, innocent."

Sometime during the summer of 2003, Bocanegra said, the rules of engagement narrowed—somewhat. "I remember on some raids, anybody of military age would be taken," he said. "Say, for example, we went to some house looking for a 25-year-old male. We would look at an age group. Anybody from 15 to 30 might be a suspect." (Since returning from Iraq, Bocanegra has sought counseling for post-traumatic stress disorder and said his "mission" is to encourage others to do the same.)

Spc. Richard Murphy, 28, an Army Reservist from Pocono, Pennsylvania, who served part of his fifteen-month tour with the 800th Military Police Brigade in Abu Ghraib prison, said he was often struck by the lack of due process afforded the prisoners he guarded.

Specialist Murphy initially went to Iraq in May 2003 to train Iraqi police in the southern city of Al Hillah but was transferred to Abu Ghraib in October 2003 when his unit replaced one that was rotating home. (He spoke with *The Nation* in October 2006, while not on active duty.) Shortly after his arrival there, he realized that the number of prisoners was growing "exponentially" while the amount of personnel remained stagnant. By the end of his six-month stint, Specialist Murphy was in charge of 320 prisoners, the majority of whom he was convinced were unjustly detained.

"I knew that a large percentage of these prisoners were innocent," he said. "Just living with these people for months you get to see their character.... In just listening to the prisoners' stories, I mean, I get the sense that a lot of them were just getting rounded up in big groups."

Specialist Murphy said one prisoner, a mentally impaired, blind albino who could "maybe see a few feet in front of his face" clearly did not belong in Abu Ghraib. "I thought to myself, What could he have possibly done?"

Specialist Murphy counted the prisoners twice a day, and the inmates would often ask him when they would be released or implore him to advocate on their behalf, which he would try to do through the JAG (Judge Advocate General) Corps office. The JAG officer Specialist Murphy dealt with would respond that it was out of his hands. "He would make his recommendations and he'd have to send it up to the next higher command," Specialist Murphy said. "It was just a snail's crawling process.... The system wasn't working."

Prisoners at the notorious facility rioted on November 24, 2003, to protest their living conditions, and Army Reserve Spc. Aidan Delgado, 25, of Sarasota, Florida, was there. He had deployed with the 320th Military Police Company to Talil Air Base, to serve in Nasiriya and Abu Ghraib for one year beginning in April 2003. Unlike the other troops in his unit, he did not respond to the riot. Four months earlier he had decided to stop carrying a loaded weapon.

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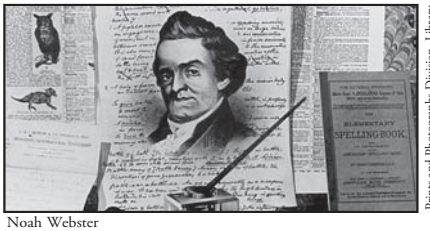

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Noah Webster

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Nine prisoners were killed and three wounded after soldiers opened fire during the riot, and Specialist Delgado's fellow soldiers returned with photographs of the events. The images, disturbingly similar to the incident described by Sergeant Mejía, shocked him. "It was very graphic," he said. "A head split open. One of them was of two soldiers in the back of the truck. They open the body bags of these prisoners that were shot in the head and [one soldier has] got an MRE spoon. He's reaching in to scoop out some of his brain, looking at the camera and he's smiling. And I said, 'These are some of our soldiers desecrating somebody's body. Something is seriously amiss.' I became convinced that this was excessive force, and this was brutality."

Spc. Patrick Resta, 29, a National Guardsman from Philadelphia, served in Jalula, where there was a small prison camp at his base. He was with the 252nd Armor, First Infantry Division, for nine months beginning in March 2004. He recalled his supervisor telling his platoon point-blank, "The Geneva Conventions don't exist at all in Iraq, and that's in writing if you want to see it."

'I told my guys, "On my count, hit them with your lights!" And one man screamed this gut-wrenching, blood-curdling, horrified scream.'

The pivotal experience for Specialist Delgado came when, in the winter of 2003, he was assigned to battalion headquarters inside Abu Ghraib prison, where he worked with Maj. David DiNenna and Lieut. Col. Jerry Phillabaum, both implicated in the Taguba Report, the official Army investigation into the prison scandal. There, Delgado read reports on prisoners and updated a dry erase board with information on where in the large prison compound detainees were moved and held.

"That was when I totally walked away from the Army," Specialist Delgado said. "I read these rap sheets on all the prisoners in Abu Ghraib and what they were there for. I expected them to be terrorists, murderers, insurgents. I look down this roster and see petty theft, public drunkenness, forged coalition documents. These people are here for petty civilian crimes."

"These aren't terrorists," he recalled thinking. "These aren't our enemies. They're just ordinary people, and we're treating them this harshly." Specialist Delgado ultimately applied for conscientious objector status, which the Army approved in April 2004.

The Enemy

American troops in Iraq lacked the training and support to communicate with or even understand Iraqi civilians, according to nineteen interviewees. Few spoke or read Arabic. They were offered little or no cultural or historical education about the country they controlled. Translators were either in short supply or unqualified. Any stereotypes about Islam and Arabs that soldiers and marines arrived with tended to solidify rapidly in the close confines of the military and the risky streets of Iraqi cities into a crude racism.

As Spc. Josh Middleton, 23, of New York City, who served in Baghdad and Mosul with the Second Battalion, Eighty-Second Airborne Division, from December 2004 to March 2005, pointed out, 20-year-old soldiers went from the humiliation of training—"getting yelled at every day if you have a dirty weapon"—to the streets of Iraq, where "it's like life and death. And 40-year-old Iraqi men look at us with fear and we can—do you know what I mean?—we have this power that you can't have. That's really liberating. Life is just knocked down to this primal level."

In Iraq, Specialist Middleton said, "a lot of guys really supported that whole concept that, you know, if they don't speak English and they have darker skin, they're not as human as us, so we can do what we want."

In the scramble to get ready for Iraq, troops rarely learned more than how to say a handful of words in Arabic, depending mostly on a single manual, *A Country Handbook, a Field-Ready Reference Publication*, published by the Defense Department in September 2002. The book, as described by eight soldiers who received it, has pictures of Iraqi military vehicles, diagrams of how the Iraqi army is structured, images of Iraqi traffic signals and signs, and about four pages of basic Arabic phrases such as *Do you speak English? I am an American. I am lost.*

Iraqi culture, identity and customs were, according to at least a dozen soldiers and marines interviewed by *The Nation*, openly ridiculed in racist terms, with troops deriding "haji food," "haji music" and "haji homes." In the Muslim world, the word "haji" denotes someone who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. But it is now used by American troops in the same way "gook" was used in Vietnam or "raghead" in Afghanistan.

"You can honestly see how the Iraqis in general or even Arabs in general are being, you know, kind of like dehumanized," said Specialist Englehart. "Like it was very common for United States soldiers to call them derogatory terms, like camel jockeys or Jihad Johnny or, you know, sand nigger."

According to Sergeant Millard and several others interviewed, "It becomes this racialized hatred towards Iraqis." And this racist language, as Specialist Harmon pointed out, likely played a role in the level of violence directed at Iraqi civilians. "By calling them names," he said, "they're not people anymore. They're just objects."

Several interviewees emphasized that the military did set up, for training purposes, mock Iraqi villages peopled with actors who played the parts of civilians and insurgents. But they said that the constant danger in Iraq, and the fear it engendered, swiftly overtook such training.

"They were the law," Specialist Harmon said of the soldiers in his unit in Al-Rashidiya, near Baghdad, which participated in raids and convoys. "They were very mean, very mean-spirited to them. A lot of cursing at them. And I'm like, Dude, these people don't understand what you're saying.… They used to say a lot, 'Oh, they'll understand when the gun is in their face.'"

Those few veterans who said they did try to reach out to Iraqis encountered fierce hostility from those in their units.

"I had the night shift one night at the aid station," said Specialist Resta, recounting one such incident. "We were told from the first second that we arrived there, and this was in writing on the wall in our aid station, that we were not to treat Iraqi civilians unless they were about to die.… So these guys in the guard

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tower radio in, and they say they've got an Iraqi out there that's asking for a doctor.

Spc. Philip Chrystal, 23, of Reno

"So it's really late at night, and I walk out there to the gate and I don't even see the guy at first, and they point out to him and he's standing there. Well, I mean he's sitting, leaned up against this concrete barrier—like the median of the highway—we had as you approached the gate. And he's sitting there leaned up against it and, uh, he's out there, if you want to go and check on him, he's out there. So I'm sitting there waiting for an interpreter, and the interpreter comes and I just walk out there in the open. And this guy, he has the shit kicked out of him. He was missing two teeth. He has a huge laceration on his head, he looked like he had broken his eye orbit and had some kind of injury to his knee."

The Iraqi, Specialist Resta said, pleaded with him in broken English for help. He told Specialist Resta that there were men near the base who were waiting to kill him.

"I open a bag and I'm trying to get bandages out and the guys in the guard tower are yelling at me, 'Get that fucking haji out of here,'" Specialist Resta said. "And I just look back at them and ignored them, and then they were saying, you know, 'He doesn't look like he's about to die to me,' 'Tell him to go cry back to the fuckin' IP [Iraqi police],' and, you know, a whole bunch of stuff like that. So, you know, I'm kind of ignoring them and trying to get the story from this guy, and our doctor rolls up in an ambulance and from thirty to forty meters away looks out and says, shakes his head and says, 'You know, he looks fine, he's gonna be all right,' and walks back to the passenger side of the ambulance, you know, kind of like, Get your ass over here and drive me back up to the clinic. So I'm standing there, and the whole time both this doctor and the guards are yelling at me, you know, to get rid of this guy, and at one point they're yelling at me, when I'm saying, 'No, let's at least keep this guy here overnight, until it's light out,' because they wanted me to send him back out into the city, where he told me that people were waiting for him to kill him.

"When I asked if he'd be allowed to stay there, at least until it was light out, the response was, 'Are you hearing this shit? I think Doc is part fucking haji,'" Specialist Resta said.

Specialist Resta gave in to the pressure and denied the man aid. The interpreter, he recalled, was furious, telling him that he had effectively condemned the man to death.

"So I walk inside the gate and the interpreter helps him up and the guy turns around to walk away and the guys in the guard tower go, say, 'Tell him that if he comes back tonight he's going to get fucking shot,'" Specialist Resta said. "And the interpreter just stared at them and looked at me and then looked back at them, and they nod their head, like, Yeah, we mean it. So he yells it to the Iraqi and the guy just flinches and turns back over his shoulder, and the interpreter says it again and he starts walking away again, you know, crying like a little kid. And that was that."

Convoys

Two dozen soldiers interviewed said that this callousness toward Iraqi civilians was particularly evident in the operation of supply convoys—operations in which they participated. These convoys are the arteries that sustain the occupation, ferrying items such as water, mail, maintenance parts, sewage, food and fuel across Iraq. And these strings of tractor-trailers, operated by KBR (formerly Kellogg, Brown & Root) and other private contractors, required daily protection by the US military. Typically, according to these interviewees, supply convoys consisted of twenty to thirty trucks stretching half a mile down the road, with a Humvee military escort in front and back and at least one more in the center. Soldiers and marines also sometimes accompanied the drivers in the cabs of the tractor-trailers.

These convoys, ubiquitous in Iraq, were also, to many Iraqis, sources of wanton destruction.

According to descriptions culled from interviews with thirty-eight veterans who rode in convoys—guarding such runs as Kuwait to Nasiriya, Nasiriya to Baghdad and Balad to Kirkuk—when these columns of vehicles left their heavily fortified compounds they usually roared down the main supply routes, which often cut through densely populated areas, reaching speeds over sixty miles an hour. Governed by the rule that stagnation increases the likelihood of attack, convoys leapt meridians in traffic jams, ignored traffic signals, swerved without warning onto sidewalks, scattering pedestrians, and slammed into civilian vehicles, shoving them off the road. Iraqi civilians, including children, were frequently run over and killed. Veterans said they sometimes shot drivers of civilian cars that moved into convoy

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formations or attempted to pass convoys as a warning to other drivers to get out of the way.

"A moving target is harder to hit than a stationary one," said Sgt. Ben Flanders, 28, a National Guardsman from Concord, New Hampshire, who served in Balad with the 172nd Mountain Infantry for eleven months beginning in March 2004. Flanders ran convoy routes out of Camp Anaconda, about thirty miles north of Baghdad. "So speed was your friend. And certainly in terms of IED detonation, absolutely, speed and spacing were the two things that could really determine whether or not you were going to get injured or killed or if they just completely missed, which happened."

Following an explosion or ambush, soldiers in the heavily armed escort vehicles often fired indiscriminately in a furious effort to suppress further attacks, according to three veterans. The rapid bursts from belt-fed .50-caliber machine guns and SAWs (Squad Automatic Weapons, which can fire as many as 1,000 rounds per minute) left many civilians wounded or dead.

"One example I can give you, you know, we'd be cruising down the road in a convoy and all of the sudden, an IED blows up," said Spc. Ben Schrader, 27, of Grand Junction, Colorado. He served in Baquba with the 263rd Armor Battalion, First Infantry Division, from February 2004 to February 2005. "And, you know, you've got these scared kids on these guns, and they just start opening fire. And there could be innocent people everywhere. And I've seen this, I mean, on numerous occasions where innocent people died because we're cruising down and a bomb goes off."

Several veterans said that IEDs, the preferred weapon of the Iraqi insurgency, were one of their greatest fears. Since the invasion in March 2003, IEDs have been responsible for killing more US troops—39.2 percent of the more than 3,500 killed—than any other method, according to the Brookings Institution, which monitors deaths in Iraq. This past May, IED attacks claimed ninety lives, the highest number of fatalities from roadside bombs since the beginning of the war.

"The second you left the gate of your base, you were always worried," said Sergeant Flatt. "You were constantly watchful for IEDs. And you could never see them. I mean, it's just by pure luck who's getting killed and who's not. If you've been in firefights earlier that day or that week, you're even more stressed and insecure to a point where you're almost trigger-happy."

Sergeant Flatt was among twenty-four veterans who said they had witnessed or heard stories from those in their unit of unarmed civilians being shot or run over by convoys. These incidents, they said, were so numerous that many were never reported.

Sergeant Flatt recalled an incident in January 2005 when a convoy drove past him on one of the main highways in Mosul. "A car following got too close to their convoy," he said. "Basically, they took shots at the car. Warning shots, I don't know. But they shot the car. Well, one of the bullets happened to just pierce the windshield and went straight into the face of this woman in the car. And she was—well, as far as I know—instantly killed. I didn't pull her out of the car or anything. Her son was driving the car, and she had her—she had three little girls in the back seat. And they came up to us, because we were actually sitting in a defensive position right next to the hospital, the main hospital in

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Mosul, the civilian hospital. And they drove up and she was obviously dead. And the girls were crying."

On July 30, 2004, Sergeant Flanders was riding in the tail vehicle of a convoy on a pitch-black night, traveling from Camp Anaconda south to Taji, just north of Baghdad, when his unit was attacked with small-arms fire and RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades). He was about to get on the radio to warn the vehicle in front of him about the ambush when he saw his gunner unlock the turret and swivel it around in the direction of the shooting. He fired his MK-19, a 40-millimeter automatic grenade launcher

Sgt. Dustin Flatt, 33, of Denver

capable of discharging up to 350 rounds per minute.

"He's just holding the trigger down and it wound up jamming, so he didn't get off as many shots maybe as he wanted," Sergeant Flanders recalled. "But I said, 'How many did you get off?' 'Cause I knew they would be asking that. He said, 'Twenty-three.' He launched twenty-three grenades.…

"I remember looking out the window and I saw a little hut, a little Iraqi house with a light on.… We were going so fast and obviously your adrenaline's—you're like tunnel vision, so you can't really see what's going on, you know? And it's dark out and all that stuff. I couldn't really see where the grenades were exploding, but it had to be exploding around the house or maybe even hit the house. Who knows? Who knows? And we were the last vehicle. We can't stop."

Convoys did not slow down or attempt to brake when civilians inadvertently got in front of their vehicles, according to the veterans who described them. Sgt. Kelly Dougherty, 29, from Cañon City, Colorado, was based at the Talil Air Base in Nasiriya with the Colorado National Guard's 220th Military Police Company for a year beginning in February 2003. She recounted one incident she investigated in January 2004 on a six-lane highway south of Nasiriya that resembled numerous incidents described by other veterans.

"It's like very barren desert, so most of the people that live there, they're nomadic or they live in just little villages and have, like, camels and goats and stuff," she recalled. "There was then a little boy—I would say he was about 10 because we didn't see the accident; we responded to it with the investigative team—a little Iraqi boy and he was crossing the highway with his, with three donkeys. A military convoy, transportation convoy driving north, hit him and the donkeys and killed all of them. When we got there, there were the dead donkeys and there was a little boy on the side of the road.

"We saw him there and, you know, we were upset because the convoy didn't even stop," she said. "They really, judging by the skid marks, they hardly even slowed down. But, I mean, that's basically—basically, your order is that you never stop."

Among supply convoys, there were enormous disparities based on the nationality of the drivers, according to Sergeant Flanders, who estimated that he ran more than 100 convoys in Balad, Baghdad, Falluja and Baquba. When drivers were not American, the trucks were often old, slow and prone to breakdowns, he said. The convoys operated by Nepalese, Egyptian or Pakistani drivers did not receive the same level of security, although the danger was more severe because of the poor quality of their vehicles. American drivers were usually placed in convoys half the length of those run by foreign nationals and were given superior vehicles, body armor and better security. Sergeant Flanders said troops disliked being assigned to convoys run by foreign nationals, especially since, when the aging vehicles broke down, they had to remain and protect them until they could be recovered.

"It just seemed insane to run civilians around the country," he added. "I mean, Iraq is such a security concern and it's so dangerous and yet we have KBR just riding around, unarmed.… Remember those terrible judgments that we made about what Iraq would look like postconflict? I think this is another incarnation of that misjudgment, which would be that, Oh, it'll be fine. We'll put a Humvee in front, we'll put a Humvee in back, we'll put a Humvee in the middle, and we'll just run with it.

"It was just shocking to me.… I was Army trained and I had a good gunner and I had radios and I could call on the radios and I could get an airstrike if I wanted to. I could get a Medevac.… And here these guys are just tooling around. And these guys are, like, they're promised the world. They're promised $120,000, tax free, and what kind of people take those jobs? Down-on-their-luck-type people, you know? Grandmothers. There were grandmothers there. I escorted a grandmother there and she did great. We went through an ambush and one of her guys got shot, and she was cool, calm and collected. Wonderful, great, good for her. What the hell is she doing there?

"We're using these vulnerable, vulnerable convoys, which prob-

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ably piss off more Iraqis than it actually helps in our relationship with them," Flanders said, "just so that we can have comfort and air-conditioning and sodas—great—and PlayStations and camping chairs and greeting cards and stupid T-shirts that say, WHO'S YOUR BAGHDADDY?"

Patrols

Soldiers and marines who participated in neighborhood patrols said they often used the same tactics as convoys—speed, aggressive firing—to reduce the risk of being ambushed or falling victim to IEDs. Sgt. Patrick Campbell, 29, of Camarillo, California, who frequently took part in patrols, said his unit fired often and without much warning on Iraqi civilians in a desperate bid to ward off attacks.

"Every time we got on the highway," he said, "we were firing warning shots, causing accidents all the time. Cars screeching to a stop, going into the other intersection.... The problem is, if you slow down at an intersection more than once, that's where the next bomb is going to be because you know they watch. You know? And so if you slow down at the same choke point every time, guaranteed there's going to be a bomb there next couple of days. So getting onto a freeway or highway is a choke point 'cause you have to wait for traffic to stop. So you want to go as fast as you can, and that involves added risk to all the cars around you, all the civilian cars.

"The first Iraqi I saw killed was an Iraqi who got too close to our patrol," he said. "We were coming up an on-ramp. And he was coming down the highway. And they fired warning shots and he just didn't stop. He just merged right into the convoy and they opened up on him."

This took place sometime in the spring of 2005 in Khadamiya, in the northwest corner of Baghdad, Sergeant Campbell said. His unit fired into the man's car with a 240 Bravo, a heavy machine gun. "I heard three gunshots," he said. "We get about halfway down the road and...the guy in the car got out and he's covered in blood. And this is where...the impulse is just to keep going. There's no way that this guy knows who we are. We're just like every other patrol that goes up and down this road. I looked at my lieutenant and it wasn't even a discussion. We turned around and we went back.

"So I'm treating the guy. He has three gunshot wounds to the chest. Blood everywhere. And he keeps going in and out of consciousness. And when he finally stops breathing, I have to give him CPR. I take my right hand, I lift up his chin and I take my left hand and grab the back of his head to position his head, and as I take my left hand, my hand actually goes into his cranium. So I'm actually holding this man's brain in my hand. And what I realized was I had made a mistake. I had checked for exit wounds. But what I didn't know was the Humvee behind me, after the car failed to stop after the first three rounds, had fired twenty, thirty rounds into the car. I never heard it.

"I heard three rounds, I saw three holes, no exit wounds," he said. "I thought I knew what the situation was. So I didn't even treat this guy's injury to the head. Every medic I ever told is always like, Of course, I mean, the guy got shot in the head. There's nothing you could have done. And I'm pretty sure—I mean, you can't stop bleeding in the head like that. But this guy,

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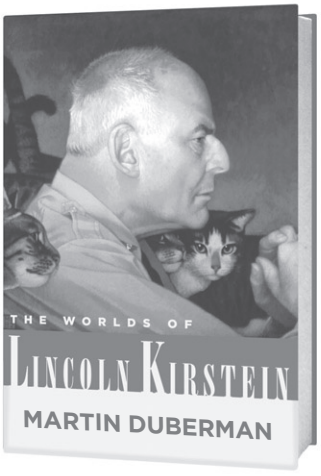

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I'm watching this guy, who I know we shot because he got too close. His car was clean. There was no—didn't hear it, didn't see us, whatever it was. Dies, you know, dying in my arms."

While many veterans said the killing of civilians deeply disturbed them, they also said there was no other way to safely operate a patrol.

"So you don't want to shoot kids, I mean, no one does," said Sergeant Campbell, as he began to describe an incident in the summer of 2005 recounted to him by several men in his unit. "But you have this: I remember my unit was coming along this elevated overpass. And this kid is in the trash pile below, pulls out an AK-47 and just decides he's going to start shooting. And you gotta understand…when you have spent nine months in a war zone, where no one—every time you've been shot at, you've never seen the person shooting at you, and you could never shoot back. Here's some guy, some 14-year-old kid with an AK-47, decides he's going to start shooting at this convoy. It was the most obscene thing you've ever seen. Every person got out and opened fire on this kid. Using the biggest weapons we could find, we ripped him to shreds." Sergeant Campbell was not present at the incident, which took place in Khadamiya, but he saw photographs and heard descriptions from several eyewitnesses in his unit.

'They open the body bags of these prisoners and one soldier has a spoon. He's reaching in to scoop out some of his brain, and he's smiling.'

"Everyone was so happy, like this release that they finally killed an insurgent," he said. "Then when they got there, they realized it was just a little kid. And I know that really fucked up a lot of people in the head.… They'd show all the pictures and some people were really happy, like, Oh, look what we did. And other people were like, I don't want to see that ever again."

The killing of unarmed Iraqis was so common many troops said it became an accepted part of the daily landscape. "The ground forces were put in that position," said First Lieut. Wade Zirkle of Shenandoah County, Virginia, who fought in Nasiriya and Falluja with the Second Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion from March to May 2003. "You got a guy trying to kill me but he's firing from houses…with civilians around him, women and children. You know, what do you do? You don't want to risk shooting at him and shooting children at the same time. But at the same time, you don't want to die either."

Sergeant Dougherty recounted an incident north of Nasiriya in December 2003, when her squad leader shot an Iraqi civilian in the back. The shooting was described to her by a woman in her unit who treated the injury. "It was just, like, the mentality of my squad leader was like, Oh, we have to kill them over here so I don't have to kill them back in Colorado," she said. "He just, like, seemed to view every Iraqi as like a potential terrorist."

Several interviewees said that, on occasion, these killings were justified by framing innocents as terrorists, typically following incidents when American troops fired on crowds of unarmed Iraqis. The troops would detain those who survived, accusing them of being insurgents, and plant AK-47s next to the bodies of those they had killed to make it seem as if the civilian dead were combatants. "It would always be an AK because they have so many of these weapons lying around," said Specialist Aoun. Cavalry scout Joe Hatcher, 26, of San Diego, said 9-millimeter handguns and even shovels—to make it look like the noncombatant was digging a hole to plant an IED—were used as well.

"Every good cop carries a throwaway," said Hatcher, who served with the Fourth Cavalry Regiment, First Squadron, in Ad Dawar, halfway between Tikrit and Samarra, from February 2004 to March 2005. "If you kill someone and they're unarmed, you just drop one on 'em." Those who survived such shootings then found themselves imprisoned as accused insurgents.

In the winter of 2004, Sergeant Campbell was driving near a particularly dangerous road in Abu Gharth, a town west of Baghdad, when he heard gunshots. Sergeant Campbell, who served as a medic in Abu Gharth with the 256th Infantry Brigade from November 2004 to October 2005, was told that Army snipers had fired fifty to sixty rounds at two insurgents who'd gotten out of their car to plant IEDs. One alleged insurgent was shot in the knees three or four times, treated and evacuated on a military helicopter, while the other man, who was treated for glass shards, was arrested and detained.

"I come to find out later that, while I was treating him, the snipers had planted—after they had searched and found nothing—they had planted bomb-making materials on the guy because they didn't want to be investigated for the shoot," Sergeant Campbell said. (He showed *The Nation* a photograph of one sniper with a radio in his pocket that he later planted as evidence.) "And to this day, I mean, I remember taking that guy to Abu Ghraib prison—the guy who didn't get shot—and just saying 'I'm sorry' because there was not a damn thing I could do about it.... I mean, I guess I have a moral obligation to say something, but I would have been kicked out of the unit in a heartbeat. I would've been a traitor."

Checkpoints

The US military checkpoints dotted across Iraq, according to twenty-six soldiers and marines who were stationed at them or supplied them—in locales as diverse as Tikrit, Baghdad, Karbala, Samarra, Mosul and Kirkuk—were often deadly for civilians. Unarmed Iraqis were mistaken for insurgents, and the rules of engagement were blurred. Troops, fearing suicide bombs and rocket-propelled grenades, often fired on civilian cars. Nine of those soldiers said they had seen civilians being shot at checkpoints. These incidents were so common that the military could not investigate each one, some veterans said.

"Most of the time, it's a family," said Sergeant Cannon, who served at half a dozen checkpoints in Tikrit. "Every now and then, there is a bomb, you know, that's the scary part."

There were some permanent checkpoints stationed across the country, but for unsuspecting civilians, "flash checkpoints" were far more dangerous, according to eight veterans who were involved in setting them up. These impromptu security perimeters, thrown up at a moment's notice and quickly dismantled, were generally designed to catch insurgents in the act of traf-

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ficking weapons or explosives, people violating military-imposed curfews or suspects in bombings or drive-by shootings.

Iraqis had no way of knowing where these so-called "tactical control points" would crop up, interviewees said, so many would turn a corner at a high speed and became the unwitting targets of jumpy soldiers and marines.

"For me, it was really random," said Lieutenant Van Engelen. "I just picked a spot on a map that I thought was a high-volume area that might catch some people. We just set something up for half an hour to an hour and then we'd move on." There were no briefings before setting up checkpoints, he said.

Temporary checkpoints were safer for troops, according to the veterans, because they were less likely to serve as static targets for insurgents. "You do it real quick because you don't always want to announce your presence," said First Sgt. Perry Jefferies, 46, of Waco, Texas, who served with the Fourth Infantry Division from April to October 2003.

The temporary checkpoints themselves varied greatly. Lieutenant Van Engelen set up checkpoints using orange cones and fifty yards of concertina wire. He would assign a soldier to control the flow of traffic and direct drivers through the wire, while others searched vehicles, questioned drivers and asked for identification. He said signs in English and Arabic warned Iraqis to stop; at night, troops used lasers, glow sticks or tracer bullets to signal cars through. When those weren't available, troops improvised by using flashlights sent them by family and friends back home.

"Baghdad is not well lit," said Sergeant Flanders. "There's not street lights everywhere. You can't really tell what's going on."

Other troops, however, said they constructed tactical control points that were hardly visible to drivers. "We didn't have cones, we didn't have nothing," recalled Sergeant Bocanegra, who said he served at more than ten checkpoints in Tikrit. "You literally put rocks on the side of the road and tell them to stop. And of course some cars are not going to see the rocks. I wouldn't even see the rocks myself."

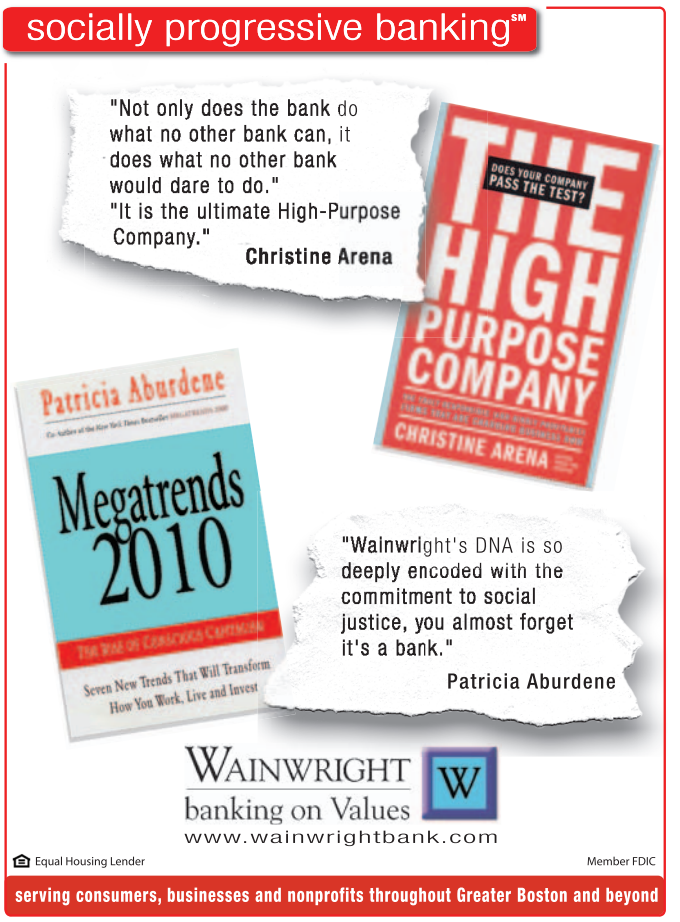
According to Sergeant Flanders, the primary concern when assembling checkpoints was protecting the troops serving there. Humvees were positioned so that they could quickly drive away if necessary, and the heavy weapons mounted on them were placed "in the best possible position" to fire on vehicles that attempted to pass through the checkpoint without stopping. And the rules of engagement were often improvised, soldiers said.

"We were given a long list of that kind of stuff and, to be honest, a lot of the time we would look at it and throw it away," said Staff Sgt. James Zuelow, 39, a National Guardsman from Juneau, Alaska, who served in Baghdad in the Third Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, for a year beginning in January 2005. "A lot of it was written at such a high level it didn't apply."

At checkpoints, troops had to make split-second decisions on when to use lethal force, and veterans said fear often clouded their judgment.

Sgt. Matt Mardan, 31, of Minneapolis, served as a Marine scout sniper outside Falluja in 2004 and 2005 with the Third Battalion, First Marines. "People think that's dangerous, and it is," he said. "But I would do that any day of the week rather than be a marine sitting on a fucking checkpoint looking at cars."

No car that passes through a checkpoint is beyond suspicion, said Sergeant Dougherty. "You start looking at everyone as a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criminal.... Is this the car that's going to try to run into me? Is this the car that has explosives in it? Or is this just someone who's confused?" The perpetual uncertainty, she said, is mentally exhausting and physically debilitating.

"In the moment, what's passing through your head is, Is this person a threat? Do I shoot to stop or do I shoot to kill?" said Lieutenant Morgenstein, who served in Al Anbar.

Sergeant Mejía recounted an incident in Ramadi in July 2003 when an unarmed man drove with his young son too close to a checkpoint. The father was decapitated in front of the small, terrified boy by a member of Sergeant Mejía's unit firing a heavy .50-caliber machine gun. By then, said Sergeant Mejía, who responded to the scene after the fact, "this sort of killing of civilians had long ceased to arouse much interest or even comment." The next month, Sergeant Mejía returned stateside for a two-week rest and refused to go back, launching a public protest over the treatment of Iraqis. (He was charged with desertion, sentenced to a year in prison and given a bad-conduct discharge.)

'I'm like, Dude, these people don't understand what you're saying. And they say, "Oh, they'll understand when the gun is in their face."'

During the summer of 2005, Sergeant Millard, who served as an assistant to a general in Tikrit, attended a briefing on a checkpoint shooting, at which his role was to flip PowerPoint slides.

"This unit sets up this traffic control point, and this 18-year-old kid is on top of an armored Humvee with a .50-caliber machine gun," he said. "This car speeds at him pretty quick and he makes a split-second decision that that's a suicide bomber, and he presses the butterfly trigger and puts 200 rounds in less than a minute into this vehicle. It killed the mother, a father and two kids. The boy was aged 4 and the daughter was aged 3. And they briefed this to the general. And they briefed it gruesome. I mean, they had pictures. They briefed it to him. And this colonel turns around to this full division staff and says, 'If these fucking hajis learned to drive, this shit wouldn't happen.'"

Whether or not commanding officers shared this attitude, interviewees said, troops were rarely held accountable for shooting civilians at checkpoints. Eight veterans described the prevailing attitude among them as "Better to be tried by twelve men than carried by six." Since the number of troops tried for killing civilians is so scant, interviewees said, they would risk court-martial over the possibility of injury or death.

Rules of Engagement

Indeed, several troops said the rules of engagement were fluid and designed to insure their safety above all else. Some said they were simply told they were authorized to shoot if they felt threatened, and what constituted a risk to their safety was open to wide interpretation. "Basically it always came down to self-defense and better them than you," said Sgt. Bobby Yen, 28, of Atherton, California, who covered a variety of Army activities in Baghdad and Mosul as part of the 222nd Broadcast Operations Detachment for one year beginning in November 2003.

"Cover your own butt was the first rule of engagement," Lieutenant Van Engelen confirmed. "Someone could look at me the wrong way and I could claim my safety was in threat."

Lack of a uniform policy from service to service, base to base and year to year forced troops to rely on their own judgment, Sergeant Jefferies explained. "We didn't get straight-up rules," he said. "You got things like, 'Don't be aggressive' or 'Try not to shoot if you don't have to.' Well, what does that mean?"

Prior to deployment, Sergeant Flanders said, troops were trained on the five S's of escalation of force: Shout a warning, Shove (physically restrain), Show a weapon, Shoot non-lethal ammunition in a vehicle's engine block or tires, and Shoot to kill. Some troops said they carried the rules in their pockets or helmets on a small laminated card. "The escalation-of-force methodology was meant to be a guide to determine course of actions you should attempt before you shoot," he said. "'Shove' might be a step that gets skipped in a given situation. In vehicles, at night, how does 'Shout' work? Each soldier is not only drilled on the five S's but their inherent right for self-defense."

Some interviewees said their commanders discouraged this system of escalation. "There's no such thing as warning shots," Specialist Resta said he was told during his predeployment training at Fort Bragg. "I even specifically remember being told that it was better to kill them than to have somebody wounded and still alive."

Lieutenant Morgenstein said that when he arrived in Iraq in August 2004, the rules of engagement barred the use of warning shots. "We were trained that if someone is not armed, and they are not a threat, you never fire a warning shot because there is no need to shoot at all," he said. "You signal to them with some other means than bullets. If they are armed and they are a threat, you never fire a warning shot because...that just gives them a chance to kill you. I don't recall at this point if this was an ROE [rule of engagement] explicitly or simply part of our consistent training." But later on, he said, "we were told the ROE was changed" and that warning shots were now explicitly allowed in certain circumstances.

Sergeant Westphal said that by the time he arrived in Iraq earlier in 2004, the rules of engagement for checkpoints were more refined—at least where he served with the Army in Tikrit. "If they didn't stop, you were to fire a warning shot," said Sergeant Westphal. "If they still continued to come, you were instructed to escalate and point your weapon at their car. And if they still didn't stop, then, if you felt you were in danger and they were about to run your checkpoint or blow you up, you could engage."

In his initial training, Lieutenant Morgenstein said, marines were cautioned against the use of warning shots because "others around you could be hurt by the stray bullet," and in fact such incidents were not unusual. One evening in Baghdad, Sergeant Zuelow recalled, a van roared up to a checkpoint where another platoon in his company was stationed and a soldier fired a warning shot that bounced off the ground and killed the van's passenger. "That was a big wake-up call," he said, "and after that we discouraged warning shots of any kind."

Many checkpoint incidents went unreported, a number of veterans indicated, and the civilians killed were not included in

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Spc. Michael Harmon, 24, of Brooklyn, New York

the overall casualty count. Yet judging by the number of checkpoint shootings described to *The Nation* by veterans we interviewed, such shootings appear to be quite common.

Sergeant Flatt recounted one incident in Mosul in January 2005 when an elderly couple zipped past a checkpoint. "The car was approaching what was in my opinion a very poorly marked checkpoint, or not even a checkpoint at all, and probably didn't even see the soldiers," he said. "The guys got spooked and decided it was a possible threat, so they shot up the car. And they literally sat in the car for the next three days while we drove by them day after day."

In another incident, a man was driving his wife and three children in a pickup truck on a major highway north of the Euphrates, near Ramadi, on a rainy day in February or March 2005. When the man failed to stop at a checkpoint, a marine in a light-armored vehicle fired on the car, killing the wife and critically wounding the son. According to Lieutenant Morgenstein, a civil affairs officer, a JAG official gave the family condolences and about $3,000 in compensation. "I mean, it's a terrible thing because there's no way to pay money to replace a family member," said Lieutenant Morgenstein, who was sometimes charged with apologizing to families for accidental deaths and offering them such compensation, called "condolence payments" or "solatia." "But it's an attempt to compensate for some of the costs of the funeral and all the expenses. It's an attempt to make a good-faith offering in a sign of regret and to say, you know, We didn't want this to happen. This is by accident." According to a May report from the Government Accountability Office, the Defense Department issued nearly $31 million in solatia and condolence payments between 2003 and 2006 to civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan who were "killed, injured or incur[red] property damage as a result of U.S. or coalition forces' actions during combat." The study characterizes the payments as "expressions of sympathy or remorse…but not an admission of legal liability or fault." In Iraq, according to the report, civilians are paid as much as $2,500 for death, as much as $1,500 for serious injuries and $200 or more for minor injuries.

On one occasion, in Ramadi in late 2004, a man happened to drive down a road with his family minutes after a suicide bomber had hit a barrier during a cordon-and-search operation, Lieutenant Morgenstein said. The car's brakes failed and marines fired. The wife and her two children managed to escape from the car, but the man was fatally hit. The family was mistakenly told that he had survived, so Lieutenant Morgenstein had to set the record straight. "I've never done this before," he said. "I had to go tell this woman that her husband was actually dead. We gave her money, we gave her, like, ten crates of water, we gave the kids, I remember, maybe it was soccer balls and toys. We just didn't really know what else to do."

One such incident, which took place in Falluja in March 2003 and was reported on at the time by the BBC, even involved a group of plainclothes Iraqi policemen. Sergeant Mejía was told about the event by several soldiers who witnessed it.

The police officers were riding in a white pickup truck, chasing a BMW that had raced through a checkpoint. "The guy that the cops were chasing got through and I guess the soldiers got scared or nervous, so when the pickup truck came they opened

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fire on it," Sergeant Mejía said. "The Iraqi police tried to cease fire, but when the soldiers would not stop they defended themselves and there was a firefight between the soldiers and the cops. Not a single soldier was killed, but eight cops were."

Accountability

A few veterans said checkpoint shootings resulted from basic miscommunication, incorrectly interpreted signals or cultural ignorance. "As an American, you just put your hand up with your palm towards somebody and your fingers pointing to the sky," said Sergeant Jefferies, who was responsible for supplying fixed checkpoints in Diyala twice a day. "That means stop to most Americans, and that's a military hand signal that soldiers are taught that means stop. Closed fist, please freeze, but an open hand means stop. That's a sign you make at a checkpoint. To an Iraqi person, that means, Hello, come here. So you can see the problem that develops real quick. So you get on a checkpoint, and the soldiers think they're saying stop, stop, and the Iraqis think they're saying come here, come here. And the soldiers start hollering, so they try to come there faster. So soldiers holler more, and pretty soon you're shooting pregnant women."

'One military convoy hit a little Iraqi boy and three donkeys and killed all of them. Judging by the skid marks, they barely slowed down.'

"You can't tell the difference between these people at all," said Sergeant Mardan. "They all look Arab. They all have beards, facial hair. Honestly, it'll be like walking into China and trying to tell who's in the Communist Party and who's not. It's impossible."

But other veterans said that the frequent checkpoint shootings resulted from a lack of accountability. Critical decisions, they said, were often left to the individual soldier's or marine's discretion, and the military regularly endorsed these decisions without inquiry.

"Some units were so tight on their command and control that every time they fired one bullet, they had to write an investigative report," said Sergeant Campbell. But "we fired thousands of rounds without ever filing reports," he said. "And so it has to do with how much interaction and, you know, the relationship of the commanders to their units."

Cpt. Megan O'Connor said that in her unit every shooting incident was reported. O'Connor, 30, of Venice, California, served in Tikrit with the Fiftieth Main Support Battalion in the National Guard for a year beginning in December 2004, after which she joined the 2-28 Brigade Combat Team in Ramadi. But Captain O'Connor said that after viewing the reports and consulting with JAG officers, the colonel in her command would usually absolve the soldiers. "The bottom line is he always said, you know, We weren't there," she said. "We'll give them the benefit of the doubt, but make sure that they know that this is not OK and we're watching them."

Probes into roadblock killings were mere formalities, a few veterans said. "Even after a thorough investigation, there's not much that could be done," said Specialist Reppenhagen. "It's just the nature of the situation you're in. That's what's wrong. It's not individual atrocity. It's the fact that the entire war is an atrocity."

The March 2005 shooting death of Italian secret service agent Nicola Calipari at a checkpoint in Baghdad, however, caused the military to finally crack down on such accidents, said Sergeant Campbell, who served there. Yet this did not necessarily lead to greater accountability. "Needless to say, our unit was under a lot of scrutiny not to shoot any more people than we already had to because we were kind of a run-and-gun place," said Sergeant Campbell. "One of the things they did was they started saying, Every time you shoot someone or shoot a car, you have to fill out a 15-[6] or whatever the investigation is. Well, that investigation is really onerous for the soldiers. It's like a 'You're guilty' investigation almost—it feels as though. So commanders just stopped reporting shootings. There was no incentive for them to say, Yeah, we shot so-and-so's car."

(Sergeant Campbell said he believes the number of checkpoint shootings did decrease after the high-profile incident, but that was mostly because soldiers were now required to use pinpoint lasers at night. "I think they reduced, from when we started to when we left, the number of Iraqi civilians dying at checkpoints from one a day to one a week," he said. "Inherent in that number, like all statistics, is those are *reported* shootings.")

Fearing a backlash against these shootings of civilians, Lieutenant Morgenstein gave a class in late 2004 at his battalion headquarters in Ramadi to all the battalion's officers and most of its senior noncommissioned officers during which he asked them to put themselves in the Iraqis' place.

"I told them the obvious, which is, everyone we wound or kill that isn't an insurgent, hurts us," he said. "Because I guarantee you, down the road, that means a wounded or killed marine or soldier.... One, it's the right thing to do to not wound or shoot someone who isn't an insurgent. But two, out of self-preservation and self-interest, we don't want that to happen because they're going to come back with a vengeance."

Responses

The Nation contacted the Pentagon with a detailed list of questions and a request for comment on descriptions of specific patterns of abuse. These questions included requests to explain the rules of engagement, the operation of convoys, patrols and checkpoints, the investigation of civilian shootings, the detention of innocent Iraqis based on false intelligence and the alleged practice of "throwaway guns." The Pentagon referred us to the Multi-National Force Iraq Combined Press Information Center in Baghdad, where a spokesperson sent us a response by e-mail.

"As a matter of operational security, we don't discuss specific tactics, techniques, or procedures (TTPs) used to identify and engage hostile forces," the spokesperson wrote, in part. "Our service members are trained to protect themselves at all times. We are facing a thinking enemy who learns and adjusts to our operations. Consequently, we adapt our TTPs to ensure maximum combat effectiveness and safety of our troops. Hostile forces hide among

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the civilian populace and attack civilians and coalition forces. Coalition forces take great care to protect and minimize risks to civilians in this complex combat environment, and we investigate cases where our actions may have resulted in the injury of innocents.... We hold our Soldiers and Marines to a high standard and we investigate reported improper use of force in Iraq."

This response is consistent with the military's refusal to comment on rules of engagement, arguing that revealing these rules threatens operations and puts troops at risk. But on February 9, Maj. Gen. William Caldwell, then coalition spokesman, writing on the coalition force website, insisted that the rules of engagement for troops in Iraq were clear. "The law of armed conflict requires that, to use force, 'combatants' must distinguish individuals presenting a threat from innocent civilians," he wrote. "This basic principle is accepted by all disciplined militaries. In the counterinsurgency we are now fighting, disciplined application of force is even more critical because our enemies camouflage themselves in the civilian population. Our success in Iraq depends on our ability to treat the civilian population with humanity and dignity, even as we remain ready to immediately defend ourselves or Iraqi civilians when a threat is detected."

When asked about veterans' testimony that civilian deaths at the hands of coalition forces often went unreported and typically went unpunished, the Press Information Center spokesperson replied only, "Any allegations of misconduct are treated seriously.... Soldiers have an obligation to immediately report any misconduct to their chain of command immediately."

Last September, Senator Patrick Leahy, then ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, called a Pentagon report on its procedures for recording civilian casualties in Iraq "an embarrassment." "It totals just two pages," Leahy said, "and it makes clear that the Pentagon does very little to determine the cause of civilian casualties or to keep a record of civilian victims."

In the four long years of the war, the mounting civilian casualties have already taken a heavy toll—both on the Iraqi people and on the US servicemembers who have witnessed, or caused, their suffering. Iraqi physicians, overseen by epidemiologists at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health, published a study late last year in the British medical journal *The Lancet* that estimated that 601,000 civilians have died since the March 2003 invasion as the result of violence. The researchers found that coalition forces were responsible for 31 percent of these violent deaths, an estimate they said could be "conservative," since "deaths were not classified as being due to coalition forces if households had any uncertainty about the responsible party."

"Just the carnage, all the blown-up civilians, blown-up bodies that I saw," Specialist Englehart said. "I just—I started thinking, like, Why? What was this for?"

"It just gets frustrating," Specialist Reppenhagen said. "Instead of blaming your own command for putting you there in that situation, you start blaming the Iraqi people.... So it's a constant psychological battle to try to, you know, keep—to stay humane."

"I felt like there was this enormous reduction in my compassion for people," said Sergeant Flanders. "The only thing that wound up mattering is myself and the guys that I was with. And everybody else be damned." ■

Research assistance was provided by Nicholas Jahr.

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LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
treme right-wing newspaper in El Salvador that brands dissent as a communist threat. The piece originally appeared in the Spanish newspaper *El País*, which accurately referred to him as an ex–Salvadoran guerrilla.

Villalobos zeroes in on Chávez's controversial move to shut down RCTV. Although the censoring of any media outlet is cause for concern, Villalobos's characterization of the network is inaccurate. RCTV does not simply broadcast soap operas, and it certainly does not promote a Venezuelan identity. RCTV along with much of the Venezuelan press, as I noted in an article for the *Washington Post* [February 4, 2006], covers every Chávez misstep, real or imagined. It is a public relations machine for the opposition, which supported and promoted the 2002 coup against Chávez and ignored the outpouring of Venezuelans who demanded his return.

I am deeply troubled that *The Nation* has presented Villalobos as a voice of the left, particularly when the genuine Latin American left and the troubles of the people there are often ignored or silenced by an unresponsive, uninterested press. MICHELLE GARCIA

Caracas

■ It is sad that *The Nation* gave space to someone who is known to have murdered one of El Salvador's most celebrated poets and who was responsible for some of the FMLN's darkest activities—the assassination of eleven Salvadoran mayors—who then failed at politics, only to turn to academia, where he finally got recognition from the world's elite for trashing left movements in Latin America.

Joaquín Villalobos clearly does not know what he is talking about, as can be seen by his absurd claim that Chávez is popular only because there is no decent opposition. Obviously he has never seen firsthand the dedicated support Chávez enjoys or seen just how radicalized his supporters have become.

Villalobos complains that Chávez did not make a real—that is, violent—revolution. True, it is a peaceful revolution because the country's poor majority feels it has a voice in governance for the first time in its history. This is not as fast as a violent revolution, but as sociologist Max Weber once pointed out, charismatic leaders can often be just as catalytic for radical change.

Villalobos limits his story of what is happening in Venezuela to its negative aspects: continued reliance on oil production, corruption and new elites. Although partly true, this is only half the picture. The other half includes the growth of participatory democracy, empowerment and greater social equality (incomes of the poorest have grown far faster than those of the rich, which have hardly grown at all).

Villalobos implies that Chávez would like to get rid of elections. There is simply no evidence for such a claim. Chávez has defended his policies in more elections in eight years (twelve, to be precise) than just about any politician on earth. GREGORY WILPERT
Editor, Venezuelanalysis.com
Author, Changing Venezuela by Taking Power *(forthcoming from Verso)*

Boston

■ Joaquín Villalobos's editorial is startling for a man who declared himself to be on the "peaceful road" for the transition from capitalism to socialism (back in the 1990s and in the pages of *Foreign Policy*).

In 2006, visiting Venezuela a skeptic of the Twenty-first Century Socialism model, I came away impressed by Chávez's genuine and extensive support. Millions of impoverished people who did not participate in the political process are now actors in a meaningful way. It is hard to imagine the kind of state violence that would be needed to repress this mobilized majority that rallies behind the Bolivarian Revolution.

As Villalobos enumerates the obvious—Chávez's relationship with the armed forces, the absence of a mass party of socialism, the need for an ideological alternative to capitalism—he fails to acknowledge the innovations of the Bolivarian experiment, including the creation of the Bolivarian Circles and the social missions. Instead Villalobos appears to have a laundry list of prerequisites for social transformation drawn from a Soviet-era high school textbook.

His concern over RCTV, more an organ to overturn the will of the electorate, is also puzzling. Nonetheless, there is one point that Villalobos makes and that supporters of the Bolivarian process will ignore at our peril: The soft ideological struggle, like RCTV's soft porn, cannot be won without providing meaningful alternatives and outlets for the many existential concerns that cannot be addressed in ideological terms—love, death, meaning. In this too, despite his raising of the issue, Villalobos is of little help. SUREN MOODLIAR

POISON GAS, THEN & NOW

Belmont, Mass.

■ "Iraq's Founding Mother," Charles Glass's excellent review of the latest book on Gertrude Bell [July 2], notes that "then-Secretary of State for War and Air Winston Churchill proposed the use of chemical weapons against Iraq's Kurds, but the technology for aerial deployment of poison gas had yet to be developed." Not so. The British Royal Air Force used poison gas against the Bolsheviks in 1919. Poison-laden mortar shells, however, were used against "Iraqi rebels" in the 1920s by the British Army. HOWARD KAPLAN

DOWN AT THE FIVE SPOT

Hinesburg, Vt.

■ Thank you for David Yaffe's splendid article on Ornette Coleman ["The Art of the Improviser," May 14]. It brought back some precious memories. May I offer a few minor corrections? When I went to the Five Spot in November 1959, walking from my cold-water flat on East 5th Street (rent, $17.50 a month), there was no cover charge, and you could sit at a table for as long as you liked after buying a 60-cent beer. Yaffe seems to suggest that the "East Village" or some kind of "gentrified bohemia" already existed in the neighborhood. I never saw it—that was farther west. "Lonely Woman" was the anthem of my nineteenth year, and I'm grateful for the reminder. GEORGE HOLOCH

Carolina, R.I.

■ Reading David Yaffe's Ornette Coleman piece brought back fond memories of Ornette's performance at the 2004 Newport Jazz Festival. The lineup was the same as his current band and they deftly moved through an intriguing, alternating fast/slow set of tunes. Ornette switched among sax, trumpet and violin while Denardo swirled through his father's sounds via his trap set. Tony Falanga arced serenely throughout on the bass stage right, while Greg Cohen savaged his upright to the point that his hand turned violet! The skies darkened and ocean mist crept in, and in a once-in-a-lifetime moment, scores of gulls hovered over the stage: the only time it happened all day! As the last tune began I recognized a familiar rhythm and leaped up as "Lonely Woman" coursed over the crowd. When it was done I went in search of food. When I returned, my friend said, "Someone was just here looking for the guy who was hootin' and hollerin' during Ornette's set. He wanted someone to explain it to him." I think the gulls explained it all. JOHN PROVOST

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

■ In Jon Wiener's "End of an Era at the *LA Weekly*" [July 16/23], New Times Media did not buy Village Voice Media for $400 million; the value of the combined companies after the merger, in which no money exchanged hands, was estimated by those involved to be about $400 million.

Also in that issue, Ramachandra Guha's "A War in the Heart of India" mentions that two Muslims have held the positions of chief justice and president of India. There have actually been three in each of these posts, which strengthens the author's point: M. Hidayatullah, M.H. Beg and A.M. Ahmadi in the former and Zakir Hussain, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in the latter.

In "What Women See When They See Hillary" [July 2], Lakshmi Chaudhry reported that Jane Fonda has compared Clinton to "a ventriloquist for the patriarchy with a skirt and a vagina." That quote originally appeared in the *LA Weekly*, framed as a comment on Clinton's disappointing war stance. Fonda, however, says that her remark did not refer to Hillary Clinton specifically. We regret the confusion.

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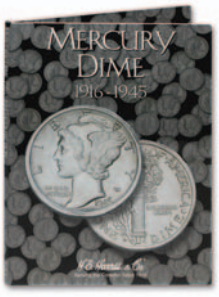

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COMMENT

CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 7)

publisher and the largest voting shareholder on the Dow Jones board outside the Bancroft family, is right to dismiss such talk as a "fig leaf" to justify a sale that "would not be a good thing for Dow Jones, for the *Wall Street Journal*, for American journalism or for the integrity of business and financial news in America, upon which our free markets rely."

Ottaway's concerns are seconded by *Financial Times* columnist Martin Wolf, who questions whether Murdoch's fifty years of media moguling have "created even one serious, authoritative and truly independent newspaper." The *Journal*'s news division, as distinct from its editorial page, is all those things, a lonely holdout for serious reporting and analysis in an age when the craft of journalism is endangered by media consolidation, Paris Hilton–obsessed "content" and record profit-taking. It's one of the major daily newspapers that are not routinely referred to as "once great."

But the paper that Americans—surveyed by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press—rate as the nation's most credible won't survive as an independent voice under Murdoch. The remarkable thing about the *Journal* is that in an era when large papers are casually pegged as liberal or conservative, this newspaper with a rabidly right-wing editorial page maintains a global newsgathering operation so free of ideological bonds that it wins high marks from just about everyone—except Murdoch, who makes little secret of his view that the *Journal* is too thoughtful and, yes, too independent.

Naïve analysts of Murdoch's maneuvering fantasize that the press baron won't alter the *Journal* because he values "the brand." They fail to recognize that Murdoch will use the paper's good name to enhance his digital and cable operations. He wants Dow Jones because he needs it in order to dominate business news online and on television. He knows he will never establish that dominance if the *Journal*'s parent company, with fresh investments or under more enlightened ownership—such as Ronald Burkle and Brad Greenspan—gets smart about new media.

For the newspaper itself he has different plans—plans that have less to do with making money than with setting agendas. Murdoch wants to re-create the *Journal* as a counterbalance to what he sees as a liberal print press, suggests a former editor for his papers, Ken Chandler. "I compare what he would do there to what he did to CNN when he started the Fox News Channel," explains Chandler.

It is not enough that the *Journal*'s editorial page already expresses the same neoliberal economic views and neoconservative enthusiasm for warmaking as the opinion pages of the *New York Post*—a paper Murdoch purchased in 1976 with a promise to "maintain its present policies" and promptly shifted hard to the right. Though the *Journal*'s ponderous editorials are the product of committed conservatives, the writers are not inclined to bark in tune with the boss. In a cheeky editorial on the possible sale, the authors—fully aware of the fact that Murdoch pulled the BBC from his Asian satellite system when its reporting ran afoul of the Chinese government—noted that "we're proud to continue fighting for freedom and human rights today in China." And no matter what the editorials say, the wall of separation between the *Journal*'s opinion pages and its news sections is the thickest in the business. That cannot be said of the *Post* or the scores of other newspapers on three continents owned by Murdoch.

Murdoch's newspapers march in lockstep. Of his more than 175 papers, not one objected to the rush to war in Iraq, which was promoted by politicians—President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair and Australian Prime Minister John Howard—who were elected with the overt support of the opinion sections and friendly boosts from the news sides of those publications and broadcast networks like Murdoch's virulently right-wing Fox News Channel. Murdoch always seems to get something in return for his election season services: Bush's Republican Congress altered rules to allow him to own more television stations in the United States; Blair dropped his Labour Party's longstanding support for strict media ownership limits; Howard stands accused of letting Murdoch dictate media policy.

But there is more to Murdoch's method than a cynically manipulative media mogul playing footsy with corrupt politicians: He is a true believer in the extremist ideologies of the moment. Murdoch didn't just cheer the Iraq War into being; he continues to defend it, with a Bush-like refusal to face reality, even going so far as to refer to US combat deaths—more than 2,800 at the time of his comment—as "minute." And he's done a lousy job of concealing his desire to join the *Journal*'s news operations to his ideological cause.

As a publication targeting serious investors and serious citizens, the *Journal* has a news division with a history of pursuing the elusive truth more vigorously and successfully than most papers. That upsets conservatives who, to paraphrase Jack Nicholson, "can't handle the truth." And Murdoch, who regards Fox's bent news as "playing it straight," proposes to remake the *Journal* as a globe-spanning business newspaper—with affiliated digital and broadcast platforms—that will soothe conservatives' delicate sensibilities. He wants to replace the in-depth articles that have been a staple of the *Journal*'s front page with "popular" news to counter his perception of the *New York Times* as a liberal bastion. "My worry about the *New York Times* is that it's got the only position as a national elitist general-interest paper," Murdoch said. "It has a huge influence. And we'd love to challenge it."

This challenge would come not merely from the right but from a place of partnership with Murdoch's political allies. Murdoch's never been "the ultimate outsider" imagined by *Time* magazine's recent cover story. From the early 1950s, when he inherited part of his father's Australian media empire, he has made a fortune—his News Corporation is valued at $68 billion—by working with power rather than speaking truth to it. Murdoch doesn't practice journalism; he molds diverse media into a single voice. It's a dangerous uniformity—threatening the democratic discourse a free press sustains as well as enabling wars by conniving with bellicose politicians. Those dangers will grow, exponentially, if the *Journal* joins Rupert Murdoch's chorus. And the shrinking list of still independent American newspapers will be reduced by one.

JOHN NICHOLS

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Kings of the Road

JONAH RASKIN

In 1907, exactly fifty years before Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* reached the *New York Times* bestseller list, Jack London—then one of the most popular authors in America—published a memoir titled simply *The Road*. Its centennial will be greeted with much less fanfare than *On the Road*'s fiftieth anniversary, which will be feted this year all over the world with readings, conferences and a new Viking reissue of the book. *The Road* reflects its author's highly developed class consciousness and comes from an era when American writers like London, Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair wrote to make their readers aware of injustices and to rouse them to political action. Moreover, London's account of his wild, eye-opening journey across the country by railroad, boat, on foot—and even barefoot, when his shoes fell apart—remains a pivotal work in the cultural history of America's long obsession with road travel, roadside attractions and road books. A literary gem in its own right, it has achieved fame among historians and scholars as the grandfather of all twentieth-century American books that explore life and death on the road, including, most famously, Kerouac's classic. For several generations of rough-and-tumble readers, including the members of the Beat generation, it served as an invitation to see the country firsthand, though not first-class.

Yet while *On the Road* is Kerouac's signature work and a pivotal text of twentieth-century American literature, London's *The Road* is a largely forgotten volume among the fifty-odd books he published, never having achieved the popularity of his tales about dogs and wolves, like *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*. Still, it is among the most compelling of his books—and the closest he came to recounting honestly his life as an outsider, outcast, wanderer and vagabond. London's portraits of American places, including small towns like Underwood, Leola, Menden, Avoca and Marno, are still memorable because he captured their undeniable hospitality and generosity and because they encouraged him, in the spirit of Walt Whitman, to sing his own song of the open road. His self-portrait is equally indelible. By depicting himself as a "stranger in a strange land," and by taking on the larger-than-life persona of "the American hobo," he was able to write insightfully about the underside of American life—the poverty, the violence and the brutality—that was largely ignored by his contemporaries Henry James, Edith Wharton and even William Dean Howells.

Kerouac credited Jack London's forgotten gem The Road*—a Beat memoir before its time—with inspiring him to become a writer.*

At first glance, London and Kerouac seem to have much in common. Both pushed themselves to psychological extremes, both burned themselves up and drank themselves to excess and death—London at 40, Kerouac at 47. Yet they also stand worlds apart from each other. Kerouac could not handle fame, while London basked in it, spending money as fast as he made it on tweed suits, silk shirts, machines, books, houses and land in Oakland and Sonoma County. He raised horses and pigs and marketed grape juice with his own image on the label, though that advertising ploy did not yield financial success. By the time he died, in 1916, he owned more than a thousand acres of prime California real estate. Depression followed him nearly his whole life, along with thoughts of suicide. His easy optimism, like Kerouac's, masked darkness and despair.

Jonah Raskin's anthology The Radical Jack London: Writings on War and Revolution *will be published by the University of California Press in 2008.*

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In the years between 1907 and 1957 America changed radically—it became a world power and developed a full-blown mass culture—and those social and cultural changes are reflected in these two books. *The Road* depicts an industrial America in which hobos and tramps are an integral part of the system—"a reserve army of the unemployed," as Marxists have called it—who help keep wages down. *On the Road* describes a postindustrial America in which cars are everywhere, almost everyone can afford a car, a radio and a television, and the mass media shape the lives of American citizens. For Kerouac the way to break out of American conformity was to drop out, of course, to reject material possessions, embrace spirituality and seek out the "fellaheen," as he called them—the indigenous peoples of the world.

London described his work as nonfiction; Kerouac called his a novel. And

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES VIA NEWSCOM

Jack London, 1916

though it's impossible to measure precisely, there's as much fictionalizing in *The Road* as there is actuality in *On the Road*. Kerouac's fictional characters are based on real people, including Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, while London's real people behave like the characters you'd meet in a novel. London admitted his penchant for borrowing other men's experiences and making them his own—as well as his habit of making himself up from whole cloth—in the first chapter of *The Road*, which he titled "Confession." There he explains that when he traveled across America in 1894, as an 18-year-old, he told the people he met that he was an orphan and had no family.

Almost all his life, London *felt* like an orphan: He was born out of wedlock and raised by a mother who rarely if ever expressed love for him and a stepfather who resented his very presence at home. Like many of the hipsters of the 1940s, the Beats of the '50s and the hippies of the '60s, London went on the road as a teenager to escape his strict parents and to join the company of wayward, vagabond boys and men who didn't have families, homes or jobs.

For part of the time, London traveled with an unemployed, rebellious contingent of men known as Kelly's Army, named after the San Francisco printer and union organizer Charles Kelly, who served as their leader and whom they followed to Washington to demand jobs from the federal government. (President Cleveland ordered federal troops to prevent them from entering the city.) That experience on the road made him feel that people can make history and that he might also have a hand in shaping American society rather than simply being shaped by it. Once he learned that lesson, he parted ways with Kelly's Army in Hannibal, Missouri, where Mark Twain had spent his youth. At that moment, vagabonding meant more to him than protesting economic injustices, though soon after, protesting would become a way of life for him. Like Huck Finn, he traveled by raft down the Mississippi River, then headed north to see the remains of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago.

His comradeship with the men in Kelly's Army—and with hobos he encountered in boxcars and railway yards in New York and Boston—transformed him, he explained, from a self-proclaimed individualist and a proud self-defined Nietzschean superman into a serious student of Karl Marx and a fiery socialist who felt a sense of kinship with comrades around the world. As soon as he returned to Oakland from his cross-continental odyssey, he joined the Socialist Party and began to write for the *San Francisco Examiner*—one of William Randolph Hearst's newspapers—about the need for earthshaking economic and political changes in America. Before long, he was the poster boy for the rapidly emerging movement, writing about class warfare and his own conversion to the left for publications like *The Comrade* and *International Socialist Review*.

The pivotal experience of his radicalization did not take place in the freedom of the open road itself but in the confinement of the Erie County Penitentiary, in New York, which he describes graphically in *The Road*. In 1894, after traveling under the radar for two months, he was arrested on charges of vagrancy and sentenced by a judge, without trial, to thirty days in prison. Behind bars he saw the nightmare beneath the American dream, and he later claimed to have witnessed horrors he could not write about. For the rest of his life he remained a foe of prisons, solitary confinement and the death penalty. He befriended ex-convicts from San Quentin and found them work, and in one of his last books, *The Star Rover*, he imagined himself as a prisoner in a straitjacket who masters astral projection and travels to other countries and historical eras. *The Road* includes a chapter titled "The Pen," which contains some of the best writing in all of London's work; not surprisingly it helped ignite the body of prison literature in this country that flourished in the 1960s and '70s, with books like Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, George Jackson's *Soledad Brother* and Tommy Trantino's *Lock the Lock*. Unsentimental and unromantic, it describes the grim realities of prison life and recounts the loss of freedom in a country founded on the bedrock idea of freedom. "Life was not monotonous in the Pen," London wrote. "Every day some-

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thing was happening: men were having fits, going crazy, fighting." He added that the prison population was a "very nightmare of humanity."

Kerouac didn't borrow London's explicitly political perspective and socialist vocabulary, but in many ways *On the Road* picks up where his predecessor left off. Like London, Kerouac identified with the down-and-out—with outlaws and outcasts. (For a brief time in the 1940s, he attended meetings of the American Communist Party; his first wife, Edie Kerouac-Parker, describes his left-wing sympathies in her memoir to be published in September by City Lights.) Although he detested almost all -isms, from capitalism to socialism, he felt passionate, like London, about freedom and indignant about servitude of any kind. He continually discussed politics with Ginsberg and Burroughs, and his books offer both overt and covert political messages. In Louisiana, when Sal Paradise, Kerouac's narrator and protagonist, wants to see the Mississippi River, he finds that he has to peer through a fence, and after a while the whole country seems fenced in—a land of the unfree. On the day of Harry Truman's inauguration in 1949, the narrator notices "great displays of war might" and "all kinds of war material that looked murderous in the snowy grass." He wants to flee as far from the military-industrial complex as possible, so he travels to Mexico, where he feels at one with peasants, workers and Mexican hipsters.

Throughout *On the Road*, Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty—based on Kerouac and Neal Cassady, respectively—are stopped by the police and locked in jail for much the same reasons that Jack London was arrested in 1894 in Erie County: They have no money and look like the usual suspects. So it's not surprising that London is the only author Kerouac mentions by name in the novel; nor is it surprising that he credited *The Road* with inspiring him to become a writer. *The Road* is a Beat memoir before the advent of the Beats, and an existentialist narrative before the arrival of existentialism. In photos London even looks like a Beatnik—especially when he's wearing his black leather jacket and denim. Going down into the abyss of society, he felt beaten down like the Beats, but he also felt, like them, a sense of beatitude. In the endless flux of life on the road, he found himself at peace in the present moment. For London, as for Kerouac, Buddhism provided a solution of sorts to the frenetic, obsessive quality of American life.

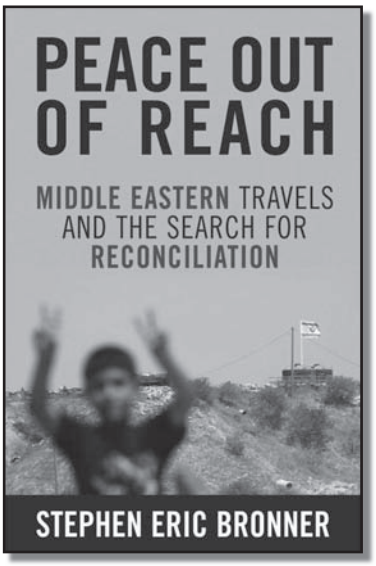
Like Kerouac, London took to the road with the explicit purpose of writing about it. He took a notebook with him, recorded his observations and wrote down ideas for characters and stories. Though he didn't take drugs, have sex, listen to jazz or drive fast cars—as Kerouac did—he managed to live an adventurous life and to be very cool and very hip, though those phrases were not a part of his vocabulary. "Perhaps the greatest charm of tramp-life is the absence of monotony," London wrote. "In Hobo Land the face of life is protean—an ever changing phantasmagoria, where the impossible happens and the unexpected jumps out of the bushes at every turn of the road."

Kerouac wrote *On the Road* on and off in the 1940s and '50s—not in one brief, furious sitting, as he would claim—when he was largely unknown and largely unpublished. London wrote *The Road* in a sudden burst of creativity that Kerouac would have envied, after spending nearly a year traveling across America to speak on college campuses and urge students to join the revolution and overthrow the capitalist system, with violence if need be. At the time he was already world-famous and one of the highest-paid authors in America.

He was also, perhaps, "the only revolutionary writer in America," to borrow the words of Emma Goldman, the Russian-born anarchist who was his friend, comrade and a frequent visitor to Beauty Ranch, his California estate. The *New York Times* argued that he'd betrayed his poetic genius by embracing revolution and even armed insurrection. "He is sacrificing the best of him to the worst of him," the *Times* proclaimed, though the reporter had enough sense to add that London "would violently disagree with me."

Still, following the publication of *The Road*, London withdrew from active participation in the Socialist Party—after more than a decade of intense involvement that began with his 1894 road trip—and became gloomy about the prospects for revolution in the United States. In the spring of 1907, he set sail on his luxury yacht, the Snark, and vowed not to return for seven years. All across the Pacific Ocean, he wrote *Martin Eden*, an autobiographical novel about a struggling writer, not unlike himself, who becomes famous, finds bourgeois success hollow and commits suicide. In *The Iron Heel* (1908), a prophetic novel, he describes government surveillance of citizens and control of news and information, and he envisions the United States as a fractured, polarized society whose power elite believes in its own moral righteousness even as it pursues immoral, illegal policies and wars. It inspired radicals around the world, including Lenin and Trotsky, but has been largely ignored in the United States.

Truman Capote once quipped that Kerouac didn't write but merely typed. Similar charges were leveled against London, who, it was said, wrote too much and too quickly. Indeed, he did; but some of that massive output—the stories of war and boxing, revolution and male camaraderie—influenced several generations of American writers, including Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis and Norman Mailer. *The Road* and *The Iron Heel* inspired George Orwell to write *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *1984*. "Much of London's work is scamped and unconvincing," Orwell wrote in an introductory essay to a collection of London's work that was published in the late 1940s, shortly before his death. "But he produced at least six volumes which deserve to stay in print, and that is not a bad achievement from a life of only forty years." ■



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Sanger vs. Sanger

REBECCA TUHUS-DUBROW

THE SELECTED PAPERS OF MARGARET SANGER, VOL. I: The Woman Rebel, 1900–1928.
Edited by Esther Katz et al. Illinois. 512 pp. Paper $35.

THE SELECTED PAPERS OF MARGARET SANGER, VOL. II: Birth Control Comes of Age, 1928–1939.
Edited by Esther Katz et al. Illinois. 528 pp. $65.

On January 17, 1916, the eve of her scheduled obscenity trial, Margaret Sanger addressed a gathering of supporters. A political radical and former nurse who would go on to found Planned Parenthood, Sanger had been indicted for the distribution of her fiery paper "The Woman Rebel," which advocated contraception. More than a hundred guests attended a dinner to listen to the comely wife and mother who had caused such a stir. The prepared text of her speech proclaimed—with typographical fervor presumably matched in her delivery—"THERE is nothing new, nothing radical in birth control. Aristotle advocated it; Plato advocated it; all our great ~~and~~ modern thinkers have advocated it!"

It was true that contraception—Sanger and her comrades coined the term "birth control" in 1914—had been practiced, or attempted, for millennia; ancient Egyptians had blocked sperm with a paste made of crocodile dung. But in the United States at the time, birth control was legally restricted and widely inaccessible, especially for the poor. In the previous century, a thriving market in prophylactics had provoked a conservative crackdown. The federal Comstock Act, passed in 1873, made it illegal to send "obscene" materials, including contraceptive devices and information, through the mail. Although the manufacture and sale of the devices were generally allowed, various state laws prohibited advertisements, doctors' prescriptions and use. These legal constraints, combined with the expense and taboo, meant, for many couples, *coitus interruptus* or pregnancy—or, frequently, both.

Birth control's enemies worried that it would encourage fornication and subvert traditional gender roles. (Their fears were, of course, not unfounded.) According to the Catholic Church, sex, even in marriage, was for procreation alone, and contraception would debase conjugal relations. Some called it "child murder." Essentially, all of the objections to birth control anticipated those more familiar today in reference to abortion.

Rebecca Tuhus-Dubrow is a journalist based in Brooklyn, New York.

On behalf of fertility control, several distinct cases were beginning to emerge in Europe and the United States. In economies that no longer relied on farm labor, ordinary couples sought to limit their families for financial reasons. Emma Goldman, the American feminist and anarchist, perceived birth control's promise for sexual freedom. Neo-Malthusians warned of explosive population growth, while eugenicists aspired to halt the reproduction of the "unfit." In her speech that winter night, Sanger, for her part, focused on the wretched conditions of the poor, forced by lack of contraception to multiply their hungry offspring. But she never met a rationale for birth control she didn't like, and over the course of her career she invoked them all.

The mother of the birth control movement took an unorthodox approach to activism. Rather than seeking solutions to a given problem, she found a solution—she called birth control her religion—and continually identified ills she thought it could remedy. In part this was sheer political calculation. At the time, eugenics, for instance, was considered progressive, and she hoped it would lend credibility to her suspect cause. But if Sanger was pragmatic to a fault, she wasn't a cynic; she seems to have truly believed in birth control's eclectic applications.

Today, of course, the most controversial of these is the disgraced philosophy of eugenics, which attempted to apply the principles of horse and dog breeding to human reproduction in order to improve the human race. By the 1920s, eugenics courses were taught at American universities, and fairs sponsored "fitter families" contests. Sanger was never a bona fide eugenicist: She always disdained a key component of the eugenics program—encouraging the "fit" to breed prolifically—and eugenicists for the most part shunned her. But she accepted their premises regarding the "unfit," and she borrowed their metaphors. In 1924 she compared ideal childbearing to the careful strategizing of the gardener: "How are we to breed a race of human thoroughbreds unless we follow the same plan? We must make this country into a garden of children instead of a disorderly back lot overrun with human weeds."

Remarks like these are a gift to today's reactionaries, whose websites feature Sanger's more embarrassing quotes, as well as misattributed and fabricated ones. Reading certain extremist "pro-life" literature, you would think Sanger was a genocidal racist and a proponent of infanticide. More responsible anti-abortion sources, such as the National Right to Life Coalition and *Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy*, a 2005 book by Catholic scholar Angela Franks, make an effort to be factually accurate and attack her for her problematic beliefs, such as her advocacy of sterilization of the "unfit." Still, their opposition to reproductive rights opens them to charges of historical selectivity, since Sanger's positions were mainstream at the time. Harder to dismiss are the critiques of black feminists like Angela Davis, who points out that minority women's longstanding alienation from mainstream white feminism has roots in Sanger's association with eugenics. What is more, some of Sanger's contemporary defenders, notably those at Planned Parenthood, have themselves quoted her out of context, downplaying her offensive views. Between the sanitizing and the smearing, it's difficult to discern who Margaret Sanger really was.

Against this polarized backdrop, *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger* is a refreshing antidote. (The first volume, *The Woman Rebel, 1900–1928*, was released in 2003; the second, *Birth Control Comes of Age, 1928–1939* has just been published. Two more volumes are planned, to cover the last third of Sanger's life and her international work.) The editors have burrowed through an archive of more than 120,000 documents to select speeches, diary entries and, mostly, letters. The papers they've chosen reflect the commendable as well as the unsavory in Sanger's political views and personal life. This fidelity extends to scrupulously transcribed misspellings and heroically comprehensive footnotes. Altogether, the two completed volumes offer a singular record of her life and times. (Ellen Chesler's 1992 biography, which likewise avoids the common biases, makes an excellent companion.)

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Born Margaret Louise Higgins in 1879, in Corning, New York, Sanger was the sixth of eleven children of two Irish-Americans. Her father, Michael, had socialist, anticlerical politics that, along with his alcohol-fueled boisterousness, antagonized the community and hastened the failure of his stonecutting business. Margaret, her father's favorite, inherited his freethinking convictions. Her mother, Anne, a forbearing Catholic, had less obvious influence on her, but Anne's life of perpetual pregnancy was Margaret's first exposure to the burdens of motherhood. Her mother gave her another inadvertent bequest as well: At 50 she died of tuberculosis, leaving Margaret, who tended to her on her deathbed, with recurring bouts of the illness, although she seems scarcely to have complained of this and comes across as the very reverse of a fragile consumptive.

Caring for her dying mother confirmed Margaret's interest in medicine, and at 20 she entered nursing school in White Plains, New York. But before graduating she met William Sanger, a handsome young Jewish draftsman and painter, at a dance, and he lobbied hard to win her hand. As she wrote to her sister Nan, "That man of mine simply carried me off—he made me marry him 'now or never' he said I had only two hours off duty—and we drove around the Park arguing on the subject until four oclock—then he turned in and made me get out—and we were married at ten minutes past—and I was due here at four thirty." Her husband was one of the first of a long series of men who would love her with such urgency.

Sanger's beauty and magnetism served her cause as well as her love life. The press frequently marveled at the ostensible disjunction between the militant message and the feminine messenger. Photographs capture her delicate features—widely spaced, liquid hazel eyes, a luminous, freckled complexion—but not her charm or sensuality. Nor are these qualities particularly apparent in her writing, even, for the most part, in her personal correspondence. More reflective of her charisma than the letters she sent are the letters she received. "I want you. I need you. Already our friendship has been the greatest thing that has ever come into my life," wrote one paramour, sounding indistinguishable from numerous others. As for her marriage, her allure probably expedited both the wedding and the eventual divorce.

In the beginning, the Sangers' union was happy. They had three children—Grant, Stuart and Peggy—and moved from the suburbs to the city. In Manhattan, they were active in the Socialist Party and mingled with the likes of Mabel Dodge and Emma Goldman. Sanger went to work as a visiting nurse in the tenements on the Lower East Side, where many of her patients suffered from repeated unwanted pregnancies. (State law allowed physicians to prescribe prophylactics to prevent venereal disease but not conception.) Later, in speeches, Sanger would tell the story of Sadie Sachs, probably a composite, a poor, ill Jewish immigrant who begged her doctor to help her avoid another pregnancy. His advice, according to Sanger: "Tell Jake to sleep on the roof." The tale of woe ended with Sadie Sachs's death from a self-induced abortion. Sanger became convinced that there had to be a better way than "continence," a more realistic solution that honored married love. She began to investigate the options—at the time the most sophisticated method was a pessary (diaphragm) with spermicide—and promote their use.

In March 1914, Sanger launched *The Woman Rebel*, an eight-page monthly produced out of her apartment. At this stage she advocated contraception for feminist reasons but also as part of an anticapitalist agenda: Workers, in her view, were multiplying too fruitfully, thus cheapening their labor; birth control offered a weapon for the revolution. In the first issue she wrote, "Woman is enslaved by the world machine, by sex conventions, by motherhood and its present necessary child-rearing, by wage-slavery, by middle-class morality, by customs, laws and superstitions." She was indicted after seven issues of this.

Rather than face trial, she fled to Europe, where she took notes on contraceptive devices and distribution in the comparatively open continent, and had an affair with a Spanish anarchist. She returned to the States after almost a year, and the charges were eventually dropped. Still, it was a time of turmoil for Sanger. Her marriage was deteriorating, thanks to her infidelities and ultimately her wish to separate despite her husband's abject resistance. Tragically aggravating this hardship, the couple's 5-year-old daughter, Peggy, died suddenly of pneumonia. Margaret's guilt over her absence for a significant fraction of the child's life would haunt her in dreams.

Her grief, though, couldn't keep her away from work for long. In October 1916 Sanger opened a clinic in Brownsville, Brooklyn, again testing the law. Hundreds of women, mostly Jewish and Italian im-

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migrants, flocked there to receive birth control information and instruction. In a newspaper interview, Sanger boasted, "You can hear them calling from house to house in the congested district, 'Oh, Mrs. Rosenbaum, you ought to see this; this is something fine!'" But after ten days, the police shut the clinic down and arrested Sanger and her colleagues. Sanger spent several weeks in prison, but the sacrifice paid off: The case resulted in a court decision that contraception could be prescribed by doctors in New York State for general health reasons, not just for the prevention of venereal disease.

This court decision, and the tremendous national attention generated through Sanger's sensational tactics, were major victories. Sanger's radicalism advanced her cause at this stage, although as she shifted to a more moderate approach, she tried to distance herself from these roots. (She denied any association with Emma Goldman—"Emma Goldman hated me," she sniffed disingenuously in one letter—even though the anarchist's vision of free love aided by birth control had in fact inspired her.) Social progress often results from the dovetailing efforts of radicals, who draw attention to a cause, and reformists, who make a more measured case and benefit from comparisons with their extremist counterparts. The primary occupant of both of these roles in the birth control movement was Sanger.

In 1922, the year after William Sanger finally granted Margaret a divorce, she married J. Noah Slee, a rich, rather dull South African–born businessman almost twenty years her senior. It was, the editors note, a marriage of convenience. From that time on, his wealth largely bankrolled the movement as well as her increasingly luxurious lifestyle, although the couple spent amazingly little time together over the years, as Sanger traveled, worked and carried on discreet affairs.

As she turned to more conventional advocacy, Sanger founded the American Birth Control League, eventually renamed Planned Parenthood, and the *Birth Control Review*, which she edited. In 1923 she established and ran the Clinical Research Bureau, which conducted studies and offered contraceptive services—legally, thanks to the court decision her Brownsville clinic had won. (At Sanger's clinic, the health provision was interpreted liberally to include "child spacing.") The birth control movement, however, was rife with infighting, as others resented her dominance and her unsystematic administrative style. In 1929 Sanger resigned from both the league and the journal she had founded. (The movement was "more like a group of Billingsgate fishwives than intelligent, responsible women championing a great cause," she complained in a letter.) But she would move on unflappably to found, that same year, the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control, devoted to lobbying Congress.

Sanger made her case for birth control with compelling logic. She had a gift for confronting her opponents on their own terms, the better to expose their inconsistencies. In 1915, she wrote, "Tolstoy was opposed to the use of preventives because they liberate men from the cares and sorrows of having children, which he thought must be regarded as the penance to be paid for sensual love. One might naturally ask why the children should be made to suffer; and if sensual love is a degraded love, why not prevent children being born in it?" But of course, Sanger disagreed with that take on sexuality, and—boldly for a woman then—she promoted erotic harmony as key to a healthy marriage. Her arguments against her nemesis, the Catholic Church, were particularly piercing. In a 1932 piece for this magazine, she asked of Jesus, "Did He ever say anything that by any twist of argument can be interpreted to mean that He disapproved of contraception? If He did, why does not the Pope cite chapter and verse?"

Although Sanger's arguments centered on the rights of women to be emancipated from conscripted motherhood, broader social ideologies were always present as well. Initially anticapitalist, she later adopted eugenic reasoning; later still, during the Depression, she insisted that birth control for the poor would solve the economy's problems. The common thread was that fewer children were better than more—a reasonable opinion with problematic implications.

Her primary exposure was to the masses of women who desperately wanted to control their family size. She received a constant stream of letters thanking her and soliciting advice, and answered many of them personally and with care. "You must not look upon this relationship as if you were a bad girl," she wrote to one young woman distraught over the premarital loss of her virginity. But presumably Sanger never received letters from the "unfit" reporting the tragedies that resulted from eugenic policies of forced sterilization. Her own views on the "dysgenic" are chilling. In a speech called "My Way to Peace" (she considered birth control the antidote to war, to boot), she advocated "a stern and rigid policy of sterilization" in order to control the reproduction of "morons, mental defectives, epileptics."

She did not regard the poor as inherently "unfit"—after all, she herself came from a poor family. She believed access to birth control would enable the working classes to provide for and nurture their children; lower quantity would mean higher quality. And in a milieu where racism was common, she frowned on prejudice in her clients and won the admiration of W.E.B. Du Bois for her work with the black community. But she believed that certain traits, such as epilepsy, mental retardation and physical disabilities, should disqualify people from reproducing. In 1934, in response to a questionnaire for the *Yale News*, she wrote of the new Nazi sterilization laws for the "unfit" (which were based on the proposals of American eugenicists): "If by 'unfit' is meant the physical or mental defects of a human being, that is an admirable gesture but if

My Life

Is made of the banging
Shock-absorbers
And hydrosulphuric stench,
And the boiling, stinking, panting
Factory line

Day and night
Lamplights
Always flicker out there

Every day! Fog and gloom.
The labor is stretched
To breaking, expectations
Are extended.
Dreams go undreamed.

Cemetery days.
One after the other.
White caskets, the planks
Of our bunks
Await our thoughts
That grow ill in this hateful prison block.

Henia Karmel
(translated from the Polish by Fanny Howe and Arie Galles)

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'unfit' refers to races or religions, then that is another matter which I frankly deplore." (Sanger later helped a number of Jews escape from Europe by promising them work in the States.)

Sanger's concept of worthwhile life, then, was ruthlessly narrow, and she readily disregarded the rights of certain people. Also, she naïvely failed to see that oppression easily leaks beyond porous barriers. In Nazi Germany, the sterilization laws she admired—explicitly directed at the mentally retarded, schizophrenic and comparable classes—were, of course, soon turned against the Jews and other ethnic groups.

In the United States, involuntary sterilization was also scandalously widespread. In 1927 the practice received the blessing of the Supreme Court in *Buck v. Bell*, which upheld the compulsory sterilization of a poor young mother, Carrie Buck, who was deemed "feeble-minded." The laws technically applied to the "feeble-minded" and other pseudo-scientifically designated "dysgenic" sorts. But in practice, the victims of involuntary sterilization—and there were tens of thousands of them, over the course of decades—were simply poor women and girls, disproportionately black, Puerto Rican and Native American.

What lessons can be taken from Sanger today? In the thorny domain of reproductive politics, widely divergent ideologies can coincide in some of the same conclusions. Sanger's heirs can be sure to disentangle true reproductive freedom from related doctrines and policies that actually jeopardize it. A given tool is not an intrinsic good. Abortion, for example, is a tremendous relief for one woman; for another, it's a heartbreaking choice made out of economic necessity; for a third, it's the result of coercive population policies in a country like China. Sanger's tendency to advocate her tool as a panacea is understandable, especially when the fight for access is uphill. But the real good is more abstract and complex: the ability of all women to make their own reproductive decisions.

The women's movement has already come a long way in learning these lessons. In recent decades, many feminists, especially minorities familiar with sterilization abuse or coerced contraception, have expanded the concept of reproductive rights to include the right to have children as well as the right not to. This contingent also takes issue with the notion of birth control as a solution to poverty. From this perspective, in a society of true reproductive justice, support would be available to help women bear and raise healthy children. Today, the dangers of coercive reproductive politics have not entirely vanished, but the voices of marginalized women ignored in Sanger's time are now more audible within the American movement.

The conflation of eugenics and reproductive rights has resurfaced, however, in a different context. New genetic technologies herald the arrival of a "new eugenics," allowing the creation of "designer babies." The original eugenics was a misguided utopian scheme gone disastrously awry, all too typical of its time; the sequel, appropriately for ours, is about consumer choice. In both cases, threats lurk among the apparent promises: This time, unfettered use of enhancement technologies could lead to starkly deepened inequalities and disconcerting control over human evolution. Whatever Sanger would have made of this new eugenics, she likely would have been surprised to see its cheerleaders appropriate the language of "reproductive choice." John Robertson, for example, a law professor and bioethicist at the University of Texas, advocates access to some of these technologies on the grounds of "procreative liberty." Reproductive rights advocates

WHY GUANTÁNAMO PRISON MUST CLOSE

Leading human rights organizations have denounced the US prison camp at Guantánamo. The International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have spoken out against it. The British Attorney General has said it is unacceptable. The European Parliament called on the United States to shut it down. Even within the US military and the upper ranks of the Bush Administration there are those who favor its closure.

Yet 800 people remain locked up there, with practically no rights, exposed to abuse — the overwhelming majority without any charge against them. Many have been imprisoned there for four or five years, with almost no contact with the outside world, suffering from the torments of isolation, offered no reason for their detention.

Sami Al Haj, Adel Hamad and Abdullah Al Matrafi are three innocent people, like so many others held in this terrible place. Sami was a television cameraman, Adel and Abdullah were humanitarian NGO staff. They were suddenly swept into a hellish, endless imprisonment.

Guantánamo symbolizes the most despotic trends of our time. Its existence flouts the rule of law and the protection of human beings from arbitrary authority. Its prisoners' suffering shocks us all. If this frightful prison continues to exist, who knows what might come next?

For these reasons, we call for the immediate closure of Guantánamo and the release of all prisoners except those against whom formal charges have been brought, who deserve a proper civil trial.

Guantánamo will continue to haunt us in the future, but let us end its terrible example in the present!

Global Coordination for Sami Al Haj
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today are rightly wary of this association.

But Sanger's most important legacy is her advocacy on behalf of women's rights and health. Her movement revolutionized mainstream society's ideas of contraception, bringing the subject "out of the gutter" and reframing it as essential to women's health and well-being. The push for abortion rights by feminists later in the century was an extension of that logic. (Although Sanger endorsed abortion in her early years, for most of her life she publicly disavowed it for political reasons.)

In 1929 Sanger began lobbying Congress and testifying about birth control; talk of such matters was unprecedented in those solemn halls. As she wrote to a colleague, "Their faces were scarlet! Poor darlings they wanted to escape but they had to sit & listen to what women endure." Although this legislative effort bore no direct fruit, Sanger got her victory, once again, from the courts, in the 1936 *U.S. v. One Package of Japanese Pessaries* case. Her clinic's staff doctor, Hannah Stone, was the recipient of this package, which was confiscated on a tip from Sanger, who wanted the chance to argue the point before the court. The ensuing case resulted in a decision in the US Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that contraceptives could no longer be classified as obscene. Shortly before her death, Sanger witnessed another triumph: the 1965 Supreme Court decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which overturned Connecticut's law against contraception for married couples. The decision articulated the right to privacy and paved the way for *Roe v. Wade* eight years later.

Sanger's lobbying coincided with Prohibition and the Depression, and most lawmakers didn't want to touch her issue. As she wrote ruefully in a letter, "One Senator told me that prohibition was a greater peril than any harm that could be done by lack of knowledge of birth control. This was quite logical from his point of view. He never had to bear a child and for him to do without a drink is a great hardship." The judicial branch, in her lifetime and afterward, has been a more reliable friend to reproductive rights.

But that has begun to change. Since *Roe*, several cases have chipped away at the constitutional right it guaranteed. And the erosion is accelerating. The Supreme Court's decision in April upholding the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, ruling against Planned Parenthood and Dr. LeRoy Carhart, is, as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote in her dissent, "alarming." For the first time since *Roe*, the Court upheld a law that lacks an exception for the woman's health, overriding the testimony of physicians that the procedure—known medically as intact dilation and evacuation—is sometimes the safest option. The five Justices in the majority betrayed the same attitude as Sanger's solipsistic senator. Justice Anthony Kennedy's poorly argued opinion appears to be based far more on antiabortion propaganda than on precedent.

This ruling is only one example of the resurgence of Sanger's opponents. Today, fundamentalist pharmacists refuse to fill prescriptions for birth control pills; some health plans cover Viagra but not contraception; Fox News recently rejected a Trojan ad because "advertising must stress health-related uses rather than the prevention of pregnancy." Sanger must be rolling over in her grave, while Comstock laughs somewhere. Still, against much greater odds, Sanger never lost faith that the last laugh would go to the side of reason. ■

FILMS

Boys (and Girls) of Summer

STUART KLAWANS

LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD • KNOCKED UP

Continuing the tradition it established with *Independence Day*, Twentieth Century Fox celebrated this year's extended July 4 holiday by blowing up a major piece of Washington, DC. It was a nostalgia trip: The demolition of the US Capitol, along with portions of New Jersey, West Virginia and a stretch of Maryland interstate, was Fox's way of welcoming back Bruce Willis in his role as old-time working-stiff action hero John McClane, in *Live Free or Die Hard*. (Despite the title, no part of New Hampshire was harmed in making this motion picture.)

A dozen years have passed since Willis last raced around as McClane in *Die Hard With a Vengeance*—years in which the world saw what real devastation could be visited on an American city, and by men armed only with box cutters. The attack on the World Trade Center ought to have made a relic of McClane, the New York cop who goes *mano a mano* against terrorists, motherfucker; and if the gravity of events didn't force this character into retirement, the weight of time on Willis's body might have finished him off.

But Willis runs his own production company and Fox needed a summer franchise movie, and so McClane, ever resilient, has been pressed back into service. Once more, he commandeers people's cars, tumbles from high places, fires bullets from an inexhaustible clip and absorbs an infinity of kicks and punches, if mostly from the neck up now, in star-saving close-up; while the still-popular spectacle of destruction has once again been offered to the American people for the pure joy of ka-blooey. Did you need more proof that September 11 did not, in fact, change everything? Then watch our hero of July 4, 2007, take out an Air Force fighter jet—yes, one of ours—using nothing more than his bare hands, an eighteen-wheel semi-trailer rig and a chunk of highway overpass. He's the box-cutter type himself.

His antagonists, though, continue to have the pretensions of sophisticates. *Live Free or Die Hard* is the tale of a strike against all the computer systems of the United States, as directed by a manicured white boy who could model for Zegna (Timothy Olyphant) and his equally unemotive girlfriend (Maggie Q), who is Eurasian by background and therefore comes accessorized with a cleavage-baring black jumpsuit and repertory of kung-fu kicks. "I'm in," these lovers keep murmuring to each other, though without anatomical reference, since the penetration occurs exclusively online. Exemplary creatures of today's high-priced thrillers, these villains know of no greater excitement than the sight of fingers typing, eyes staring at monitors and progress bars slowly filling. Download 15 percent complete. Download 18 percent complete. Download 17 percent complete. Please wait.

McClane, of course, begs to differ. He has no patience for digital flow, being a guy

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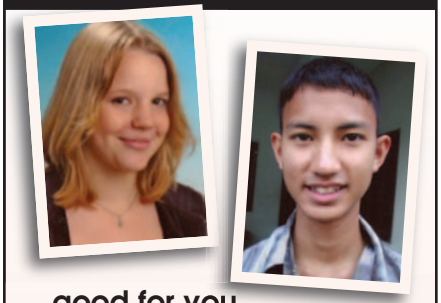

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for whom "technology" is a handy fire extinguisher used for the impromptu incineration of opponents. Somebody halfway sympathetic to the audience needs to help this man. Enter the hacker, Matt Farrell: a surrogate character for all those 18- to 25-year-olds who watch movies for the sake of seeing computer effects. Played by Justin Long, an amiable performer best known for impersonating a Mac computer in TV commercials, Matt is both a plot convenience and a much-needed bridge between younger ticket buyers and Willis's 40-plus demographic.

As a member of the latter group (and then some), I enjoyed seeing an old guy battle the labor-saving software that now wastes so much of my time. I will also admit that the director (Len Wiseman) did a good job of stimulating my reptilian brain, a part of the body that creationists hold to be merely theoretical. The faithful want me to believe that God must love summer movies, since He designed my nervous system so the frontal lobes could be left idle while the core delights in bursts of pulsing orange fireballs set against an otherwise gun-metal palette. But we must evolve! Thoughts, prompted fitfully and feebly by Wiseman and the screenwriters of record, kept intruding on the sound-and-light show, mostly to comment on the ambiguity of McClane and his nerdy sidekick.

With McClane, the doubleness is familiar. He always mutters about being a tired, put-upon guy whom no one appreciates; but he's also the first to howl with delight, even before the audience can, when he drops someone down an elevator shaft. If McClane were as plain-spoken as we're supposed to think, his motto would be, "It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to love doing it." As for reedy, scraggly and bedraggled Matt, I suppose he should have a slogan, too: "When computers are outlawed, only outlaws will have computers." He enters the story as a cybercriminal, taken into custody by the cop who's almost a vigilante. By the end, Matt is almost a cop himself.

Live Free or Die Hard is the boot camp that whips this slacker into shape, for the nation's good and his own. The movie's terrorists, you see, are homegrown, and they operate by exploiting useful idiots ("as Lenin said") such as Matt. Witness the danger within: a lax and disaffected young American, self-righteously critical of public servants such as Fox News. ("Don't you know, it's all lies, put out there by corporate interests!") If Matt weren't carrying important information in his head, McClane might simply beat him to death, as he jocularly suggests doing at one

EVENTS

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point. Instead, he converts Matt, turning him into someone who respects authority and will take up arms against America's enemies. Or, to use the precise McClanean terms: Matt grows a bigger set of balls.

Which brings us to the not-so-secret theme.

Imagine today's inadequate man in a different mode. He still lazes about but in a cheerfully plump way; devotes himself to the computer but without striving for expertise; scoffs at the Man but does so in Los Angeles, where he's got plenty of company. Take Matt out of an action thriller and put him into a romantic comedy, and he might turn into Ben Stone, the guy with just enough balls to set off the plot of *Knocked Up*.

A box-office hit and critical success, *Knocked Up* has elicited commentary both for its sexual candor (in which it was outdone half a century ago by *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek*) and for its characters' decision not to resort to abortion. With all due respect for the political situation in which the film has emerged, I think this latter issue is beside the point. *Knocked Up* belongs to the genre that Stanley Cavell brilliantly defined as the American comedy of remarriage: films about a woman and man who have separated because their original union was false, and who now must work out a true way to live together. With allowances made for contemporary manners, this is pretty much the project of *Knocked Up*. There can be no abortion because the drunken one-night stand must lead to nine months of moral, social and emotional education.

But even though *Knocked Up* respects the conventions of the comedy of remarriage, it also departs from them by taking this deeply adult genre and regressing it toward childhood. Whereas the male lead used to be Clark Gable, Cary Grant or Henry Fonda, today he is Seth Rogen, an actor who is all baby fat and overgrown curls. The basic gag in *Knocked Up* is that Rogen's Ben is utterly outclassed by blond, buxom and camera-ready Alison (Katherine Heigl), to whom he can justly say, in drunken wonder, "You're prettier than me." The more elaborate gag is that Rogen seems perpetually surprised to have a growly voice and stubbled chin. He belongs in Pampers himself.

Whatever changes Gable and Grant had to undergo in their comedies of remarriage, they didn't need to learn to accept minimal adult responsibility. You may judge the distance between their era and ours by the fact that Rogen's education in *Knocked Up* barely rises to adult topics. He mostly learns to bathe, dress neatly, tidy his room, eat properly, engage people in conversation and read: training for a 6-year-old.

Meanwhile, what process of education does writer-director Judd Apatow propose for Heigl? On the most obvious level, none. She must learn to overlook the unappetizing exterior and love Rogen for the sweet, funny guy within—a task she's already proved she can accomplish, right at the start, given enough beer and tequila. This leaves her seeming unformed (embryonic, you might say) compared with predecessors such as Barbara Stanwyck and Irene Dunne—though more from Apatow's negligence than from any design. And yet Heigl, too, faces a subtler challenge (subtler, because it is relatively unexplored in the script): to break her dependence on an older sister with whom she lives as a semi-official boarder, sharing in her sister's family life while observing the unhappiness of her marriage.

If Cavell were to interpret *Knocked Up*, maybe he'd seize on Alison's deeper problem and identify the movie's essential question as one of community. What is the right relationship between a married couple and the people around them? The initial union of Alison and Ben is false because the characters won't budge from their existing groups. (His buddies keep him juvenile. Her sister and brother-in-law keep her mesmerized by domestic pain.) If Alison and Ben are to choose each other, rather than be joined by circumstance, they must therefore peel themselves away from these others, not so completely as to be disloyal but enough to form the beginning of a semi-autonomous community of their own—which is *Knocked Up*'s definition of a true marriage.

Fine with me—even though, for all the cinema I saw in *Knocked Up*, I could just as well have been watching television. I chuckled some; I smiled a lot. And this community business reassured me. "What if the peer-group standards in *Knocked Up* are plausible?" I thought. (And why wouldn't they be, with the gross now mounting above $100 million?) It would mean that while a large number of American men enjoy watching John McClane's rampages, they expect one another to be no more testosterone-charged than Matt the Hacker.

Very reasonable, I say—because in a decent community, men ought to nerve themselves up before getting into fights. On September 11, on United Flight 93, the men who really did go *mano a mano* against terrorists weren't professional heroes, ready to do violence at any time. They were a toy company manager, a public-relations flack, a couple of salesmen and a guy who worked for a software company. They might just as well have been Ben and Matt from *Knocked Up* and *Live Free or Die Hard*, each of whom spends an entire movie getting ready to assert himself.

Live Free or Die Hard is knowing enough to admit this reality, when in the end it proposes its own little comedy of misalliance, between Matt and McClane's daughter. Having survived the obligatory hostage ordeal, she has rediscovered her affection for the old paternal bully and is deeply grateful to him; but compared with Matt, she knows, Dad's a dinosaur.

The good news: If young Ms. McClane shares the apparent peer-group standards of women in today's movies, perhaps we may look forward to *Bringing Baby Up Hard*. ■

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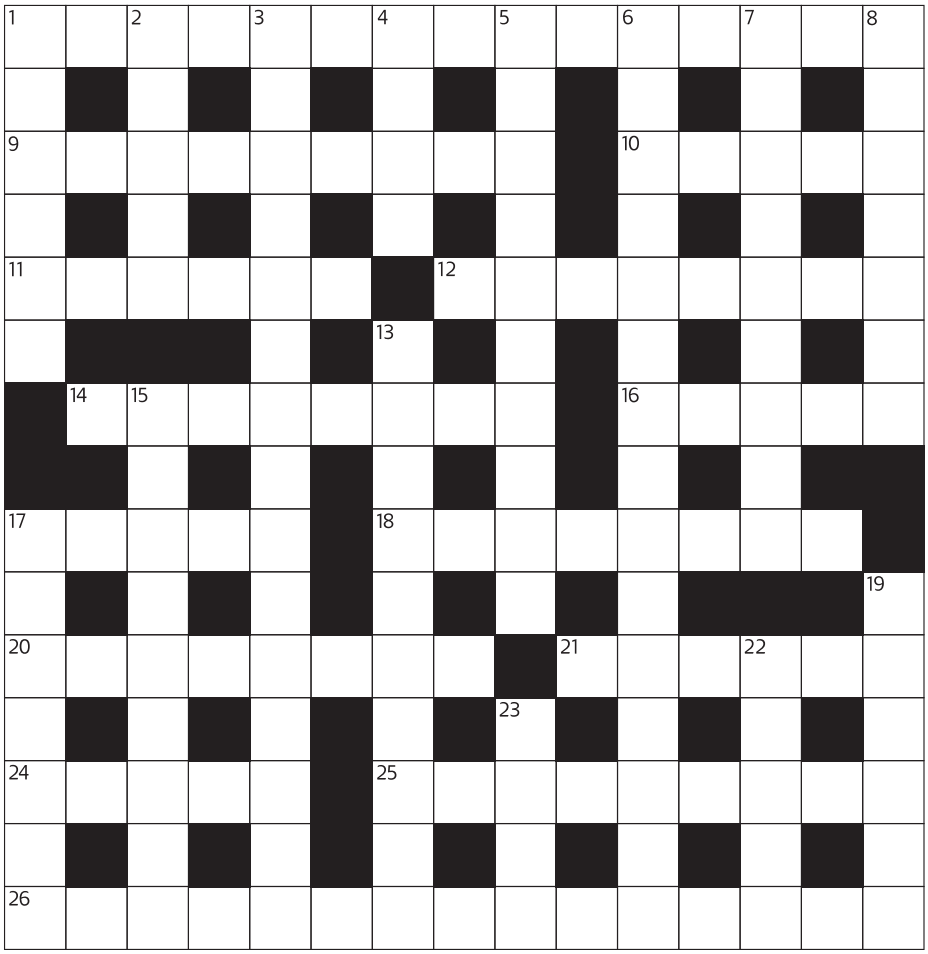

ACROSS

1 A shifting series of illusions. (15)

9 Proving such as America is acting under restraint. (9)

10 Carry me back always, as they used to say, as shown by the ruler. (5)

11 The exercise of reason? "One's wrong is the answer." (6)

12 You can make a bad list upon what you hope the kids are! (8)

14 Majorettes are at times sounding like dervishes to a T. (8)

16 The common name for a follower of gold or silver, or black, perhaps. (5)

17 Make a perch in tangled roots. (5)

18 What the poet had at night, parting at morning. (8)

20 Homes, one hears, where the girl has the right thing that might need a key. (8)

21 You might find it safe to throw a party. (6)

24 Earl, that's the name of the book! (5)

25 Evidently the stupidest, at any rate! (9)

26 How you say "pass on" instead of "dying"? (15)

DOWN

1 When walking the floor, lift your hat, and end up with a gin sling. (6)

2 The girl who was told to get armed on the stage? (5)

3 This could give all of us a lift, but you had better be careful with it. (You might know it as a tenet with no e's.) (15)

4 Take off for the outbuilding! (4)

5 Is not a different form put to the previous answer—being really taken aback? (10)

6 Just the opposite of a super-Pollyanna in behavior. (4-11)

7 Listing and a mite crazy—giving one a real quick charge! (9)

8 When a dog comes up to this, it isn't necessarily a good example, but we like many things to come up to it. (7)

13 Why would we want to eat such little worms? (10)

15 A to B, perhaps—offering twice what B to C presents. (5,4)

17 Something to wear with pride—and in Paris with a store built around it. (7)

19 How some people are seen at a nudist colony to be hardly this. (6)

22 Yours 'til love shows the source of moonshine. (5)

23 Tense, perhaps, now that it's over! (4)

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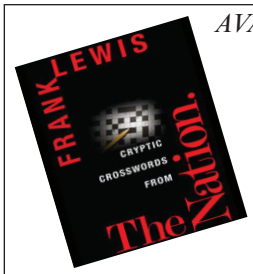

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Dr. Ahmed is regularly interviewed on CNN, CBC and the BBC and has appeared several times on the Oprah Winfrey show and Night Line. His most recent book, *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization*, is the result of extensive travels and interviews conducted by Dr. Ahmed and a young American team throughout the Muslim world.

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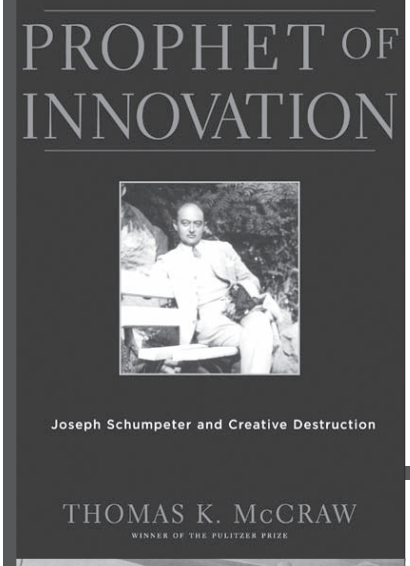

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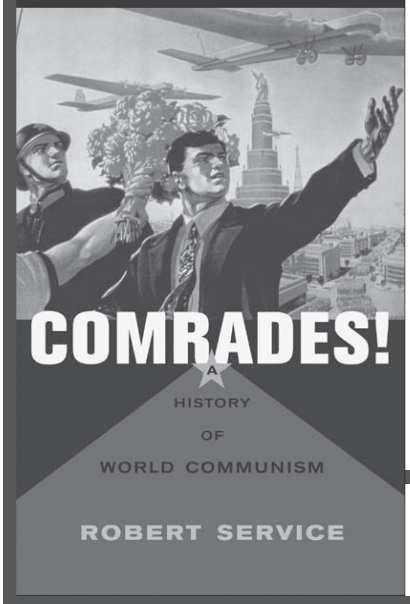

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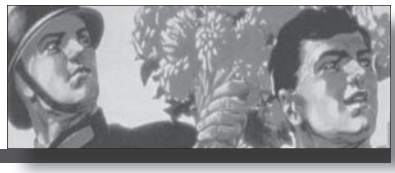

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